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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY DR. GREGORY;

AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER,

BY JOHN FOSTER.

66919

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

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VOL. I.

SERMONS, CHARGES, AND CIRCULAR LETTERS.

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MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY;

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE,

IN NOVEMBER, 1799.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.
St. Paul.

Sunt qui in fortunæ jam casibus omnia ponant,
Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
Natura volvente vices et lucis et anni;
Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt.
Juv.

PREFACE.

THE author knows not whether it be necessary to apologize for the extraordinary length of this sermon, which so much exceeds the usual limits of public discourses; for it is only for the reader to conceive (by a fiction of the imagination, if he pleases so to consider it) that the patience of his audience indulged him with their attention during its delivery. The fact is, not being in the habit of writing his sermons, this discourse was not committed to paper till after it was delivered: so that the phraseology may probably vary, and the bulk be somewhat extended: but the substance is certainly retained.

He must crave the indulgence of the religious public, for having blended so little *theology* with it. He is fully aware the chief attention of a christian minister should be occupied in explaining the doctrines, and enforcing the duties, of genuine christianity. Nor is he chargeable, he hopes, in the exercise of his public functions, with any remarkable deviation from this rule of conduct: yet he is equally convinced, excursions into other

topics are sometimes both lawful and necessary. The versatility of error demands a correspondent variety in the methods of defending truth: and from whom have the public more right to expect its defence, in opposition to the encroachments of error and infidelity, than from those who profess to devote their studies and their lives to the advancement of virtue and religion? Accordingly, a multitude of publications on these subjects, equally powerful in argument, and impressive in manner, have issued from divines of different persuasions, which must be allowed to have done the utmost honour to the clerical profession. The most luminous statements of the evidences of christianity, on historical grounds, have been made; the petulant cavils of infidels satisfactorily refuted; and their ignorance, if not put to shame, at least amply exposed: so that revelation, as far as truth and reason can prevail, is on all sides triumphant.

There is one point of view, however, in which the respective systems remain to be examined, which, though hitherto little considered, is forced upon our attention by the present conduct of our adversaries; that is, their *influence on society.* The controversy appears to have taken a new turn. The advocates of infidelity, baffled in the field of argument, though unwilling to relinquish the contest, have changed their mode of attack; and seem less disposed to impugn the authority, than to supersede the use, of revealed religion, by

giving such representations of man and of society as are calculated to make its sanctions appear unreasonable and unnecessary. Their aim is not so much to discredit the pretensions of any particular religion as to set aside the principles common to all.

To obliterate the sense of Deity, of moral sanctions, and a future world; and by these means to prepare the way for the total subversion of every institution, both social and religious, which men have been hitherto accustomed to revere, is evidently the principal object of modern sceptics; the first sophists who have avowed an attempt to govern the world, without inculcating the persuasion of a superior power. It might well excite our surprise to behold an effort to shake off the yoke of religion, which was totally unknown during the prevalence of gross superstition, reserved for a period of the world distinguished from every other by the possession of a revelation more pure, more perfect, and better authenticated, than the enlightened sages of antiquity ever ventured to anticipate, were we not fully persuaded the immaculate holiness of this revelation is precisely that which renders it disgusting to men who are determined at all events to retain their vices. Our Saviour furnishes the solution:—*They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; neither will they come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

While all the religions, the Jewish excepted,

which, previous to the promulgation of christianity, prevailed in the world, partly the contrivance of human policy, partly the offspring of ignorant fear, mixed with the mutilated remains of traditionary revelation, were favourable to the indulgence of some vices, and but feebly restrained the practice of others; betwixt vice of every sort and in every degree, and the religion of Jesus, there subsists an irreconcilable enmity, an eternal discord. The dominion of christianity being, in the very essence of it, the dominion of virtue, we need look no further for the sources of hostility in any who oppose it, than their attachment to vice and disorder.

This view of the controversy, if it be just, demonstrates its supreme importance; and furnishes the strongest plea, with every one with whom it is not a matter of indifference whether vice or virtue, delusion or truth, govern the world, to exert his talents, in whatever proportion they are possessed, in *contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.* In such a crisis, is it not best for christians of all denominations, that they may better concentrate their forces against the common adversary, to suspend for the present their internal disputes; imitating the policy of wise states, who have never failed to consider the invasion of an enemy as the signal for terminating the contests of party? Internal peace is the best fruit we can reap from external danger. The momentous contest at issue betwixt the christian

church and infidels may instruct us how trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of its members with each other; and that the different ceremonies, opinions, and practices, by which they are distinguished, correspond to the variety of feature and complexion discernible in the offspring of the same parent, among whom there subsists the greatest family likeness. May it please God so to dispose the minds of christians of every visible church and community, *that Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim;* that the only rivalry felt in future may be, who shall most advance the interests of our common christianity; and the only provocation sustained, that of *provoking each other to love and good works!* When, at the distance of more than half a century, christianity was assaulted by a *Woolston,* a *Tindal,* and a *Morgan,* it was ably supported, both by clergymen of the established church, and writers among protestant dissenters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated with those of a *Doddridge,* a *Leland,* and a *Lardner,* with such equal reputation and success, as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage the heart.

The writer of this discourse will feel himself happy, should his example stimulate any of his brethren, of superior abilities, to contribute their exertions in so good a cause. His apology for

not entering more at large into the proofs of the being of a God,* and the evidences of Christianity,† is, that these subjects have been already handled with great ability by various writers; and that he wished rather to confine himself to one view of the subject—The total incompatibility of sceptical principles with the existence of society. Should his life be spared, he may probably, at some future time, enter into a fuller and more particular examination of the infidel philosophy, both with respect to its speculative principles, and its practical effects; its influence on society, and on the individual. In the mean time he humbly consecrates this discourse to the honour of that Saviour, who, when the means of a more liberal offering are wanting, commends the widow's mite.

CAMBRIDGE,
January 18, 1800.

* See an excellent sermon on Atheism, by the Rev. Mr. Estlin, of Bristol, at whose meeting the substance of this discourse was first preached. In the sermon referred to, the argument for the existence of a Deity is stated with the utmost clearness and precision; and the sophistry of Dupuis, a French infidel, refuted in a very satisfactory manner.

† It is almost superfluous to name a work so universally known as Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, which is probably, without exception, the most clear and satisfactory statement of the historical proofs of the christian religion ever exhibited in any age or country.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

NOTHING can be more erroneous than the idea, entertained by a few persons, that Mr. Hall recited his sermons *memoriter*, from the study of a previously written composition. His eloquence was the spontaneous result of his vigorous and richly stored intellect, and needed not the aid of the usual expedients of men of ordinary mind. There is great reason to believe that, during the entire extent of his ministry, he only committed one sermon to memory from a previously composed manuscript, and that was the second in this volume, "Reflections on War." It was preached on a day of thanksgiving, at the termination of a long and dreadful war; it was a publicly announced sermon, to aid the funds of a benevolent society; persons of different religious and political sentiments were expected to be assembled, at a time when the violent party-feelings excited by the French Revolution of 1789 had but little subsided; and Mr. Hall, afraid of yielding to his own emotions on such an occasion, and perhaps of disturbing the feelings of harmony which it was hoped would prevail, thought it advisable for once to deviate from his usual course. That course was, very briefly to sketch, commonly upon a sheet of letter paper, (in some cases rather more fully,) the plan of the proposed discourse, marking the divisions, specifying a few texts, and sometimes writing the first sentence; or, occasionally, a few other sentences, especially in those parts where an argument could not be adequately stated without great technical correctness of

language. This he regarded as " digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in." Then, calling into exercise the power of abstraction, which he possessed in a degree I never saw equalled, he would, whether alone or not, pursue his trains of thought, retrace and extend them, until the whole were engraven on his mind; and, when once so fixed in their entire connexion, they were never after obliterated. The result was on all occasions the same; so that without recurring to the ordinary expedients, or loading his memory with words and phrases, he uniformly brought his mind, with an unburdened vigour and elasticity, to bear upon its immediate purpose, recalling the selected train of thought, and communicating it to others, in diction the most felicitous, appropriate, and impressive. This was uniformly the case with regard to the tenour and substance of his discourses; but the most striking and impressive passages were often, strictly speaking, extemporaneous.

On various occasions I have ascertained the correctness of his recollection as to trains of thought and matters of arrangement. Thus, on drawing his attention fully to an interesting conversation which occurred nearly thirty years before, he has given as vivid and graphic a sketch of the persons present, their positions in the room, and of the main topics discussed, as though all had occurred in the preceding week. So again, with respect to sermons preached early in the present century, and which seemed to have entirely escaped from his recollection; when a reference to some illustration, or the mode of treating a subsidiary topic, has supplied the adequate clew, he has accurately described the plan, the reasoning, the object of the discourse, the illustrations employed, the principal texts adduced, &c., dwelling especially, as was always most natural to him, upon the parts that he regarded as defective.

The history of the following sermon, on " Modern Infidelity," may serve still further to illustrate the peculiar structure of Mr. Hall's intellect. He preached it first at Bristol, in October, 1799, and again at Cambridge early in the month of November. Having yielded to the solicitations of

his friends, and consented to its publication, there remained two difficulties, that of writing down the sermon (of which not a single sentence was upon paper), and that of superintending the press. I, who then resided at Cambridge, offered to undertake both these, provided he would engage not to go farther than ten miles from Cambridge, and allow me to follow him, wherever he went, to obtain "copy," as it should be needed. He acceded to that part of the arrangement which related to the printing; but would not consent that I should be his amanuensis on that occasion. The writing, therefore, he undertook himself, but with great reluctance, on account of the severe pain which even then (and, indeed, much earlier) he experienced when remaining long in a sitting posture. The work, in consequence, proceeded slowly, and with many interruptions. At first I obtained from him eight pages, and took them to the printer; after a few days, four pages more; then two or three pages; then a more violent attack of his distressing pain in the back compelled him to write two or three pages *while lying on the floor;* and soon afterwards a still more violent paroxysm occasioned a longer suspension of his labour. After an interval of a week, the work was renewed at the joint entreaty of myself and other friends. It was pursued in the same manner, two or three pages being obtained for the printer at one time, a similar portion after a day or two, until, at the end of seven weeks, the task was completed. During the whole time of the composition, thus conducted, Mr. Hall never saw a single page of the printer's work. When I applied for more "copy," he asked what it was that he had written last, and then proceeded. Very often, after he had given me a small portion, he would inquire if he had written it nearly in the words which he had employed in delivering the sermon orally. After he had written down the striking apostrophe which occurs at page 70 of the present edition—"Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent! what are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the

eye of Heaven must not *penetrate!*"—he asked, "Did I say *penetrate*, Sir, when I preached it?" "Yes." "Do you think, Sir, I may venture to alter it? for no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity." "You are doubtless at liberty to alter it, if you think well." "Then be so good, Sir, to take your pencil, and for *penetrate* put *pierce; pierce* is the word, Sir, and the only word to be used there." I have now the evidence of this before me, in the entire manuscript, which I carefully preserve among my richest literary treasures.

At the end of seven weeks Mr. Hall's labour, thus conducted, being, greatly to his delight, brought to a close, I presented him with a complete copy of his printed sermon, *not one word* of which he had seen in its progress.

During this interval, he had preached at least twenty times, had paid his pastoral visits, as usual, had been often in the society of the literary men with whom he then associated, and had, with all his characteristic ardour, carried on, simultaneously, two distinct courses of reading.

I mistake greatly, if, after the perusal of this simple narrative, the reader will not turn to the sermon with additional relish, and meditate with augmented pleasure upon the peculiarities of this most valuable production, and the singular character of its author's mind.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
June 1, 1831.

A SERMON.

EPHES. ii. 12.

Without God in the world.

As the christian ministry is established for the instruction of men, throughout every age, in truth and holiness, it must adapt itself to the ever-shifting scenes of the moral world, and stand ready to repel the attacks of impiety and error, under whatever form they may appear. The church and the world constitute two societies so distinct, and are governed by such opposite principles and maxims, that, as well from this contrariety, as from the express warnings of scripture, true christians must look for a state of warfare, with this consoling assurance, that the church, like the burning bush beheld by Moses in the land of Midian, may be encompassed with flames, but will never be consumed.

When she was delivered from the persecuting power of Rome, she only experienced a change of trials. The oppression of external violence was followed by the more dangerous and insidious attacks of internal enemies. The freedom of

inquiry claimed and asserted at the reformation, degenerated, in the hands of men who professed the principles without possessing the spirit of the reformers, into a fondness for speculative refinements; and consequently into a source of dispute, faction, and heresy. While protestants attended more to the points on which they differed than to those in which they agreed; while more zeal was employed in settling ceremonies and defending subtleties, than in enforcing plain revealed truths; the lovely fruits of peace and charity perished under the storms of controversy.

In this disjointed and disordered state of the christian church, they who never looked into the interior of christianity were apt to suspect, that to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes must attach a general uncertainty; and that a religion founded on revelation could never have occasioned such discordancy of principle and practice among its disciples. Thus infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper and unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing christians. It has passed through various stages, each distinguished by higher gradations of impiety; for when men arrogantly abandon their guide, and wilfully shut their eyes on the light of heaven, it is wisely ordained that their errors shall multiply at every step, until their extravagance confutes itself, and the mischief of their principles works its own antidote.

That such has been the progress of infidelity will be obvious from a slight survey of its history.

Lord HERBERT, the first and purest of our English free-thinkers, who flourished in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, did not so much impugn the doctrine or the morality of the scriptures, as attempt to supersede their necessity, by endeavouring to shew that the great principles of the unity of God, a moral government, and a future world, are taught with sufficient clearness by the light of nature. BOLINGBROKE, and some of his successors, advanced much farther, and attempted to invalidate the proofs of the moral character of the Deity, and consequently all expectations of rewards and punishments; leaving the Supreme Being no other perfections than those which belong to a first cause, or almighty contriver. After him, at a considerable distance, followed HUME, the most subtle, if not the most philosophical of the deists; who, by perplexing the relations of cause and effect, boldly aimed to introduce a universal scepticism, and to pour a more than Egyptian darkness into the whole region of morals. Since his time sceptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its standard: the young and the superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary reputation of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism, the most undisguised, has at length begun to make its appearance.

Animated by numbers, and imboldened by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculations.

By uniting more closely with each other, by giving a sprinkling of irreligion to all their literary productions, they aim to engross the formation of the public mind; and, amidst the warmest professions of attachment to virtue, to effect an entire disruption of morality from religion. Pretending to be the teachers of virtue, and the guides of life, they propose to revolutionize the morals of mankind; to regenerate the world by a process entirely new; and to rear the temple of virtue, not merely without the aid of religion, but on the renunciation of its principles, and the derision of its sanctions. Their party has derived a great accession of numbers and strength from events the most momentous and astonishing in the political world, which have divided the sentiments of Europe betwixt hope and terror; and which, however they may issue, have, for the present, swelled the ranks of infidelity. So rapidly, indeed, has it advanced since this crisis, that a great majority on the continent, and in England a considerable proportion of those who pursue literature as a profession,*

* By those who pursue literature as a profession, the author would be understood to mean that numerous class of literary men who draw their principal subsistence from their writings.

may justly be considered as the open or disguised abettors of atheism.

With respect to the sceptical and religious systems, the inquiry at present is not so much which is the truest in speculation, as which is the most useful in practice; or, in other words, whether morality will be best promoted by considering it as a part of a great and comprehensive law, emanating from the will of a supreme, omnipotent legislator; or as a mere expedient, adapted to our present situation, enforced by no other motives than those which arise from the prospects and interests of the present state. The absurdity of atheism having been demonstrated so often and so clearly by many eminent men, that this part of the subject is exhausted, I should hasten immediately to what I have more particularly in view, were I not apprehensive a discourse of this kind may be expected to contain some statement of the argument in proof of a Deity; which, therefore, I shall present in as few and plain words as possible.

When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, shew it to be a contrivance; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. The human eye, for

example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight, the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. ' If there be an inseparable relation betwixt the ideas of a contrivance and a contriver; and it be evident, in regard to the human structure, the designing agent is not man himself, there must undeniably be some separate invisible being, who is his former. This great Being we mean to indicate by the appellation of Deity.

This reasoning admits but of one reply. Why, it will be said, may we not suppose the world has always continued as it is; that is, that there has been a constant succession of finite beings, appearing and disappearing on the earth from all eternity? I answer, Whatever is supposed to have occasioned this constant succession, exclusive of an intelligent cause, will never account for the undeniable marks of design visible in all finite beings. Nor is the absurdity of supposing a contrivance without a contriver diminished by this imaginary succession; but rather increased, by being repeated at every step of the series.

Besides, an eternal succession of finite beings involves in it a contradiction, and is therefore plainly impossible. As the supposition is made to get quit of the idea of any one having existed from

eternity, each of the beings in the succession must have begun in time: but the succession itself is eternal. We have then the succession of beings infinitely earlier than any being in the succession; or, in other words, a series of beings running on, *ad infinitum,* before it reached any particular being, which is absurd.

From these considerations it is manifest there must be some eternal Being, or nothing could ever have existed: and since the beings which we behold bear in their whole structure evident marks of wisdom and design, it is equally certain that he who formed them is a wise and intelligent agent.

To prove the unity of this great Being, in opposition to a plurality of gods, it is not necessary to have recourse to metaphysical abstractions. It is sufficient to observe, that the notion of more than one author of nature is inconsistent with that harmony of design which pervades her works; that it explains no appearances, is supported by no evidence, and serves no purpose but to embarrass and perplex our conceptions.

Such are the proofs of the existence of that great and glorious Being whom we denominate God; and it is not presumption to say, it is impossible to find another truth in the whole compass of morals, which, according to the justest laws of reasoning, admits of such strict and rigorous demonstration.

But I proceed to the more immediate object of this discourse, which, as has been already

intimated, is not so much to evince the falsehood of scepticism as a theory, as to display its mischievous effects, contrasted with those which result from the belief of a Deity, and a future state. The subject, viewed in this light, may be considered under two aspects; the influence of the opposite systems on the principles of morals, and on the formation of character. The first may be styled their direct, the latter their equally important, but indirect consequence and tendency.

I. The sceptical, or irreligious system, subverts the whole foundation of morals. It may be assumed as a maxim, that no person can be required to act contrarily to his greatest good, or his highest interest, comprehensively viewed in relation to the whole duration of his being. It is often our duty to forego our own interest *partially*, to sacrifice a smaller pleasure for the sake of a greater, to incur a present evil in pursuit of a distant good of more consequence. In a word, to arbitrate amongst interfering claims of inclination is the moral arithmetic of human life. But to risk the happiness of the whole duration of our being in any case whatever, were it possible, would be foolish; because the sacrifice must, by the nature of it, be so great as to preclude the possibility of compensation.

As the present world, on sceptical principles, is the only place of recompense, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of

present good, (cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance,) every motive to virtuous conduct is superseded; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and, should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and folly, and a violation of the first and most essential law of nature. Virtue, on these principles, being in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind.

The system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates appeal to a moral sense, to benevolence and sympathy; for it is undeniable that these impulses may be overcome. In vain will they expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course: for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end.

Rewards and punishments, assigned by infinite power, afford a palpable and pressing motive which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature: but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed.

A motive in which the reason of man shall acquiesce, enforcing the practice of virtue at all times and seasons, enters into the very essence of moral obligation. Modern infidelity supplies no such motives: it is therefore essentially and infallibly a system of enervation, turpitude, and vice.

This chasm in the construction of morals can only be supplied by the firm belief of a rewarding and avenging Deity, who binds duty and happiness, though they may seem distant, in an indissoluble chain; without which, whatever usurps the name of virtue, is not a principle, but a feeling; not a determinate rule, but a fluctuating expedient, varying with the tastes of individuals, and changing with the scenes of life.

Nor is this the only way in which infidelity subverts the foundation of morals. All reasoning on morals pre-supposes a distinction between inclinations and duties, affections and rules. The former prompt; the latter prescribe. The former supply motives to action; the latter regulate and control it. Hence it is evident, if virtue have any just claim to authority, it must be under the latter of these notions; that is, under the character of a law. It is under this notion, *in fact*, that its dominion has ever been acknowledged to be paramount and supreme.

But without the intervention of a superior will, it is impossible there should be any moral laws, except in the lax metaphorical sense in which we speak of the laws of matter and motion. Men

being essentially equal, morality is, on these principles, only a stipulation, or silent compact, into which every individual is supposed to enter, as far as suits his convenience, and for the breach of which he is accountable to nothing but his own mind. His own mind is his law, his tribunal, and his judge!

Two consequences, the most disastrous to society, will inevitably follow the general prevalence of this system;—the frequent perpetration of great crimes, and the total absence of great virtues.

1. In those conjunctures which tempt avarice or inflame ambition, when a crime flatters with the prospect of impunity, and the certainty of immense advantage, what is to restrain an atheist from its commission? To say that remorse will deter him, is absurd; for remorse, as distinguished from pity, is the sole offspring of religious belief, the extinction of which is the great purpose of the infidel philosophy.

The dread of punishment or infamy, from his fellow-creatures, will be an equally ineffectual barrier; because crimes are only committed under such circumstances as suggest the hope of concealment: not to say that crimes themselves will soon lose their infamy and their horror, under the influence of that system which destroys the sanctity of virtue, by converting it into a low calculation of worldly interest. Here the sense of an ever-present Ruler, and of an avenging Judge, is of

the most awful and indispensable necessity; as it is that alone which impresses on all crimes the character of *folly*, shews that duty and interest in every instance coincide, and that the most prosperous career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an *accumulation of wrath against the day of wrath.*

As the frequent perpetration of great crimes is an inevitable consequence of the diffusion of sceptical principles; so, to understand this consequence in its full extent, we must look beyond their immediate effects, and consider the disruption of social ties, the destruction of confidence, the terror, suspicion, and hatred, which must prevail in that state of society in which barbarous deeds are familiar. The tranquillity which pervades a well-ordered community, and the mutual good offices which bind its members together, are founded on an implied confidence in the indisposition to annoy; in the justice, humanity, and moderation of those among whom we dwell. So that the worst consequence of crimes is, that they impair the stock of public charity and general tenderness. The dread and hatred of our species would infallibly be grafted on a conviction that we were exposed every moment to the surges of an unbridled ferocity, and that nothing but the power of the magistrate stood between us and the daggers of assassins. In such a state, laws, deriving no support from public manners, are unequal to the task of curbing the fury of the passions; which,

from being concentrated into selfishness, fear, and revenge, acquire new force. Terror and suspicion beget cruelty, and inflict injuries by way of prevention. Pity is extinguished in the stronger impulse of self-preservation. The tender and generous affections are crushed; and nothing is seen but the retaliation of wrongs, and the fierce and unmitigated struggle for superiority. This is but a faint sketch of the incalculable calamities and horrors we must expect, should we be so unfortunate as ever to witness the triumph of modern infidelity.

2. This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtues as it is prolific in crimes. By great and sublime virtues are meant, those which are called into action on great and trying occasions, which demand the sacrifice of the dearest interests and prospects of human life, and sometimes of life itself: the virtues, in a word, which, by their rarity and splendour, draw admiration, and have rendered illustrious the character of patriots, martyrs, and confessors. It requires but little reflection to perceive, that whatever veils a future world, and contracts the limits of existence within the present life, must tend, in a proportionable degree, to diminish the grandeur and narrow the sphere of human agency.

As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester, as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes the whole happiness of his being on the

events of this vain and fleeting life. If he be ever impelled to the performance of great achievements in a good cause, it must be solely by the hope of fame; a motive which, besides that it makes virtue the servant of opinion, usually grows weaker at the approach of death; and which, however it may surmount the love of existence in the heat of battle, or in the moment of public observation, can seldom be expected to operate with much force on the retired duties of a private station.

In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach: but to what history, to what record will they appeal for the traits of moral greatness exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity, or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory, and disastrous lustre.

Though it is confessed great and splendid actions are not the ordinary employment of life, but must, from their nature, be reserved for high and eminent occasions; yet that system is essentially defective which leaves no room for their production. They are important, both from their immediate advantage and their remoter influence. They often save, and always illustrate, the age and nation in which they appear. They raise the standard of

morals; they arrest the progress of degeneracy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life: monuments of the greatness of the human soul, they present to the world the august image of virtue in her sublimest form, from which streams of light and glory issue to remote times and ages; while their commemoration, by the pen of historians and poets, awakens in distant bosoms the sparks of kindred excellence.

Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition of society which completes the degradation of the species—the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every thing good is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant: a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.

II. Hitherto we have considered the influence of scepticism on the principles of virtue; and have endeavoured to shew that it despoils it of its dignity, and lays its authority in the dust. Its influence on the formation of character remains to be examined. The actions of men are oftener determined by their character than their interest: their conduct takes its colour more from their acquired taste, inclinations, and habits, than from a deliberate regard to their greatest good. It is only on great occasions the mind awakes to take

an extended survey of her whole course, and that she suffers the dictates of reason to impress a new bias upon her movements. The actions of each day are, for the most part, links which follow each other in the chain of custom. Hence the great effort of practical wisdom is to imbue the mind with right tastes, affections, and habits; the elements of character, and masters of action.

1. The exclusion of a supreme Being, and of a superintending Providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence, even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable raptures in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

When we reflect on the manner in which the idea of Deity is formed, we must be convinced that such an idea, intimately present to the mind, must have a most powerful effect in refining the moral taste. Composed of the richest elements, it embraces in the character of a beneficent Parent and almighty Ruler, whatever is venerable in

wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness.

Human excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is embodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to reality: the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence.

The efficacy of these views in producing and augmenting a virtuous taste, will indeed be proportioned to the vividness with which they are formed, and the frequency with which they recur; yet some benefit will not fail to result from them even in their lowest degree.

The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property; that, as it admits of no substitute, so, from the first moment it is formed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent,

by having transferred to it new elements of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself, as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, or happiness. It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe.

As the object of worship will always be, in a degree, the object of imitation, hence arises a fixed standard of moral excellence; by the contemplation of which the tendencies to corruption are counteracted, the contagion of bad example is checked, and human nature rises above its natural level.

When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and moral obligation disappeared along with it. How is it to be otherwise accounted for, that in the polished nations, and in the enlightened times, of pagan antiquity, the most unnatural lusts and detestable impurities were not only tolerated in private life,* but entered into religion, and formed a material part of public

* It is worthy of observation, that the elegant and philosophic Xenophon, in delineating the model of a perfect prince in the character of Cyrus, introduces a Mede who had formed an unnatural passion for his hero; and relates the incident in a lively, festive humour, without being in the least conscious of any indelicacy attached to it. What must be the state of manners in a country where a circumstance of this kind, feigned, no doubt, by way of ornament, finds a place in such a work? *Cyri Instit.* lib. i.

"Deinde nobis, qui, *concedentibus philosophis antiquis*, adolescentulis delectamur, etiam vitia sæpe jucunda sunt." *Cicero De Nat. Dei*, lib. i.

worship;* while among the Jews, a people so much inferior in every other branch of knowledge, the same vices were regarded with horror?

The reason is this: The true character of God was unknown to the former, which by the light of divine revelation was displayed to the latter. The former cast their deities in the mould of their own imaginations, in consequence of which they partook of the vices and defects of their worshippers. To the latter no scope was left for the wanderings of fancy; but a pure and perfect model was prescribed.

False and corrupt, however, as was the religion of the pagans (if it deserve the name), and defective, and often vicious, as was the character of their imaginary deities, it was still better for the world that the void should be filled with these than abandoned to a total scepticism; for if both systems are equally false, they are not equally pernicious. When the fictions of heathenism consecrated the memory of its legislators and heroes, it invested them for the most part with those qualities which were in the greatest repute. They were supposed to possess in the highest degree the virtues in which it was most honourable to

* "——*Nam quo non prostat fœmina templo?*" Juv.

The impurities practised in the worship of Isis, an Egyptian deity, rose to such a height in the reign of Tiberius, that that profligate prince thought fit to prohibit her worship, and at the same time inflicted on her priests the punishment of crucifixion. *Joseph. Antiq. Judaic.* lib. xviii.

excel; and to be the witnesses, approvers, and patrons of those perfections in others, by which their own character was chiefly distinguished. Men saw, or rather fancied they saw, in these supposed deities, the qualities they most admired, dilated to a larger size, moving in a higher sphere, and associated with the power, dignity, and happiness of superior natures. With such ideal models before them, and conceiving themselves continually acting under the eye of such spectators and judges, they felt a real elevation; their eloquence became more impassioned, their patriotism inflamed, and their courage exalted.

Revelation, by displaying the true character of God, affords a pure and perfect standard of virtue; heathenism, one in many respects defective and vicious; the fashionable scepticism of the present day, which excludes the belief of all superior powers, affords no standard at all. Human nature knows nothing better or higher than itself. All above and around it being shrouded in darkness, and the prospect confined to the tame realities of life, virtue has no room upwards to expand; nor are any excursions permitted into that unseen world, the true element of the great and good, by which it is fortified with motives equally calculated to satisfy the reason, to delight the fancy, and to impress the heart.

2. Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste; it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social

happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality; and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.

That the love, fear, and habitual contemplation of a Being infinitely exalted, or, in other words, devotion, is adapted to promote a sober and moderate estimate of our own excellencies, is incontestable; nor is it less evident that the exclusion of such sentiments must be favourable to pride. The criminality of pride will, perhaps, be less readily admitted; for though there is no vice so opposite to the spirit of christianity, yet there is none which, even in the christian world, has, under various pretences, been treated with so much indulgence.

There is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others. Very different is that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames the heart and occupies the whole attention of vain men. This, of all the passions, is the most unsocial, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute

subdivisions than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union and conjunction of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, every man in whom vanity is the ruling passion, regarding his rival as his enemy, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and repine at his success.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed, (and it is often disappointed,) it is exasperated into malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his

food. Virtues, talents, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity: a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that, whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize; he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence, or his steps are dyed in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

His apparent good qualities lose all their worth, by losing all that is simple, genuine, and natural; they are even pressed into the service of vanity, and become the means of enlarging its power. The truly good man is jealous over himself lest the notoriety of his best actions, by blending itself with their motive, should diminish their value; the vain man performs the same actions for the sake of

that notoriety. The good man quietly discharges his duty, and shuns ostentation; the vain man considers every good deed lost that is not publicly displayed. The one is intent upon realities, the other upon semblances: the one aims to *be* virtuous, the other to *appear* so.

Nor is a mind inflated with vanity more disqualified for right action than just speculation, or better disposed to the pursuit of truth than the practice of virtue. To such a mind the simplicity of truth is disgusting. Careless of the improvement of mankind, and intent only upon astonishing with the appearance of novelty, the glare of paradox will be preferred to the light of truth; opinions will be embraced, not because they are just, but because they are new: the more flagitious, the more subversive of morals, the more alarming to the wise and good, the more welcome to men who estimate their literary powers by the mischief they produce, and who consider the anxiety and terror they impress as the measure of their renown. Truth is simple and uniform, while error may be infinitely varied: and as it is one thing to start paradoxes, and another to make discoveries, we need the less wonder at the prodigious increase of modern philosophers.

We have been so much accustomed to consider extravagant self-estimation merely as a *ridiculous* quality, that many will be surprised to find it treated as a vice pregnant with serious mischief to society. But to form a judgment of its influence on the

manners and happiness of a nation, it is necessary only to look at its effects in a family; for bodies of men are only collections of individuals, and the greatest nation is nothing more than an aggregate of a number of families. Conceive of a domestic circle, in which each member is elated with a most extravagant opinion of himself, and a proportionable contempt of every other; is full of little contrivances to catch applause, and whenever he is not praised is sullen and disappointed. What a picture of disunion, disgust, and animosity would such a family present! How utterly would domestic affection be extinguished, and all the purposes of domestic society be defeated! The general prevalence of such dispositions must be accompanied by an equal proportion of general misery. The tendency of pride to produce strife and hatred, is sufficiently apparent from the pains men have been at to construct a system of politeness which is nothing more than a sort of mimic humility, in which the sentiments of an offensive self-estimation are so far disguised and suppressed as to make them compatible with the spirit of society; such a mode of behaviour as would naturally result from an attention to the apostolic injunction: *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* But if the semblance be of such importance, how much more useful the reality! If the mere garb of humility be of such indispensable necessity that without it society could not subsist, how much

better still would the harmony of the world be preserved, were the condescension, deference, and respect, so studiously displayed, a true picture of the heart!

The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom; infusing into those intrusted with the enaction of laws, a spirit of rash innovation and daring empiricism, a disdain of the established usages of mankind, a foolish desire to dazzle the world with new and untried systems of policy, in which the precedents of antiquity and the experience of ages are only consulted to be trodden under foot; and into the executive department of government, a fierce contention for pre-eminence, an incessant struggle to supplant and destroy, with a propensity to calumny and suspicion, proscription and massacre.

We shall suffer the most eventful season ever witnessed in the affairs of men to pass over our heads to very little purpose, if we fail to learn from it some useful lessons on the nature and progress of the passions. The true light in which the French revolution ought to be contemplated is that of a grand experiment on human nature. Among the various passions which that revolution has so strikingly displayed, none is more conspicuous than vanity; nor is it less difficult, without adverting to the national character of the people, to account for its extraordinary predominance. Political power,

the most seducing object of ambition, never before circulated through so many hands; the prospect of possessing it was never before presented to so many minds. Multitudes, who, by their birth and education, and not unfrequently by their talents, seemed destined to perpetual obscurity, were, by the alternate rise and fall of parties, elevated into distinction, and shared in the functions of government. The short-lived forms of power and office glided with such rapidity through successive ranks of degradation, from the court to the very dregs of the populace, that they seemed rather to solicit acceptance than to be a prize contended for.* Yet, as it was still impossible for all to possess authority, though none were willing to obey, a general impatience to break the ranks and rush into the foremost ground, maddened and infuriated the nation, and overwhelmed law, order, and civilization, with the violence of a torrent.

If such be the mischiefs both in public and private life resulting from an excessive self-estimation, it remains next to be considered whether Providence has supplied any medicine to correct it; for as the reflection on excellencies, whether real or imaginary, is always attended with pleasure to the possessor, it is a disease deeply seated in our nature.

Suppose there were a great and glorious Being always present with us, who had given us ex-

* ——— "Æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres." *Hor.*

istence, with numberless other blessings, and on whom we depended each instant, as well for every present enjoyment as for every future good: suppose, again, we had incurred the just displeasure of such a Being by ingratitude and disobedience, yet that in great mercy he had not cast us off, but had assured us he was willing to pardon and restore us on our humble entreaty and sincere repentance; say, would not an habitual sense of the presence of this Being, self-reproach for having displeased him, and an anxiety to recover his favour, be the most effectual antidote to pride? But such are the leading discoveries made by the christian revelation, and such the dispositions which a practical belief of it inspires.

Humility is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Religion, and that alone, teaches *absolute* humility; by which I mean a sense of our *absolute* nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often an unwelcome sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it: that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence

in the divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.

The wicked (says the Psalmist) *through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all their thoughts.* When we consider the incredible vanity of the atheistical sect, together with the settled malignity and unrelenting rancour with which they pursue every vestige of religion, is it uncandid to suppose that its humbling tendency is one principal cause of their enmity; that they are eager to displace a Deity from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void; to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins; and that, as their licentiousness is impatient of restraint, so their pride disdains a superior?

We mentioned a ferocity of character as one effect of sceptical impiety. It is an inconvenience attending a controversy with those with whom we have few principles in common, that we are often in danger of reasoning inconclusively, for the want of its being clearly known and settled what our opponents admit, and what they deny. The persons, for example, with whom we are at present

engaged, have discarded humility and modesty from the catalogue of virtues; on which account we have employed the more time in evincing their importance: but whatever may be thought of humility as a *virtue*, it surely will not be denied that inhumanity is a most detestable *vice;* a vice, however, which scepticism has a most powerful tendency to inflame.

As we have already shewn that pride hardens the heart, and that religion is the only effectual antidote, the connexion between irreligion and inhumanity is in this view obvious. But there is another light in which this part of the subject may be viewed, in my humble opinion, much more important, though seldom adverted to. The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably more *consequence* than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by an Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Every thing which relates to him becomes interesting; and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. If such be the destination of man, it is evident that in the qualities which fit him for it his principal dignity consists: his moral greatness

is his true greatness. Let the sceptical principles be admitted, which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost betwixt him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions.

If we reflect on that part of our nature which disposes us to humanity, we shall find that, where we have no particular attachment, our sympathy with the sufferings, and concern for the destruction, of sensitive beings, are in proportion to their supposed importance in the general scale; or, in other words, to their supposed capacity of enjoyment. We feel, for example, much more at witnessing the destruction of a man than of an inferior animal, because we consider it as involving the extinction of a much greater sum of happiness. For the same reason, he who would shudder at the slaughter of a large animal, will see a thousand insects perish without a pang. Our sympathy with the calamities of our fellow-creatures is adjusted to the same proportions; for we feel more powerfully affected with the distresses of fallen greatness than with equal or greater distresses sustained by persons of inferior rank; because, having been accustomed to associate with an elevated station, the idea of superior happiness, the loss appears

the greater, and the wreck more extensive. But the disproportion in importance betwixt man and the meanest insect, is not so great as that which subsists betwixt man considered as *mortal* and as *immortal;* that is, betwixt man as he is represented by the system of scepticism, and that of divine revelation: for the enjoyment of the meanest insect bears some proportion, though a very small one, to the present happiness of man; but the happiness of time bears none at all to that of eternity. The sceptical system, therefore, sinks the importance of human existence to an inconceivable degree.

From these principles results the following important inference—that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence, must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a sceptic from what it is in those of a christian. With the sceptic it is nothing more than diverting the course of a little red fluid, called blood; it is merely lessening the number by one of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him for ever in an unalterable condition of felicity or woe. The former perceives in death nothing but its physical circumstances; the latter is impressed with the magnitude of its moral consequences. It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to

a superior power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions and actions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny, more than any superiority of intellectual powers abstracted from these considerations, which invest him with such mysterious grandeur, and constitute the firmest guard on the sanctuary of human life. This reasoning, it is true, serves more *immediately* to shew how the disbelief of a future state endangers the security of life; but, though this be its *direct* consequence, it extends by analogy much further, since he who has learned to sport with the *lives* of his fellow-creatures will feel but little solicitude for their welfare in any other instance; but, as the greater includes the less, will easily pass from this to all the inferior gradations of barbarity.

As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society in which law and order maintain their ascendency, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed, let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed, and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury (events which recent experience shews to be possible), it will then be seen that atheism is a school of ferocity; and that, having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party

to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.

It was late* before the atheism of Epicurus gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence was soon followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were *then* unparalleled in the history of the world; from which the republic, being never able to recover itself, after many unsuccessful struggles, exchanged liberty for repose, by submission to absolute power. Such were the effects of atheism at Rome. An attempt has been recently made to establish a similar system in France, the consequences of which are too well known to render it requisite for me to shock your feelings by a recital. The only doubt that can arise is, whether the barbarities which have stained the revolution in that unhappy country are justly chargeable on the prevalence of atheism. Let those who doubt of this, recollect that the men who, by their activity and talents, prepared the minds of the people for that great change—*Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, Rousseau,* and others, were avowed enemies of revelation; that in all their writings the diffusion of scepticism and revolutionary principles went hand in hand; that the fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the christian priesthood and religious institutions, without once pretending, like

* "Neque enim assentior iis qui *hæc nuper* disserere cœperunt, cum corporibus simul animos interire atque omnia morte deleri." *Cicero de Amicitia.*

other persecutors, to execute the vengeance of God (whose name they never mentioned) upon his enemies; that their atrocities were committed with a wanton levity and brutal merriment; that the reign of atheism was avowedly and expressly the reign of terror; that, in the full madness of their career, in the highest climax of their horrors, they shut up the temples of God, abolished his worship, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep; as if, by pointing to the silence of the sepulchre, and the sleep of the dead, these ferocious barbarians meant to apologize for leaving neither sleep, quiet, nor repose to the living.

As the heathens fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter, so no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure, and of arts, into a theatre of blood.

Having already shewn that the principles of infidelity facilitate the commission of crimes, by removing the restraints of fear; and that they foster the arrogance of the individual, while they inculcate the most despicable opinion of the species; the inevitable result is, that a haughty self-confidence, a contempt of mankind, together with a daring defiance of religious restraints, are the natural ingredients of the atheistical character; nor is it less evident that these are, of all others,

the dispositions which most forcibly stimulate to violence and cruelty.

Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint, and to every virtuous affection; that, leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor round us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and with earth: its first object is to dethrone God, its next to destroy man.*

There is a third vice, not less destructive to society than either of those which have been already mentioned, to which the system of modern infidelity is favourable; that is, unbridled sensuality, the licentious and unrestrained indulgence of those passions which are essential to the continuation of the species. The magnitude of these passions, and their supreme importance to the existence as well as the peace and welfare of society, have rendered it one of the first objects of solicitude with every wise legislator, to restrain them by such laws, and to confine their indulgence within such limits, as shall best promote the great ends for which they were implanted.

* As human nature is the same in all ages, it is not surprising to find the same moral systems, even in the most dissimilar circumstances, produce corresponding effects. Josephus remarks that the Sadducees, a kind of Jewish infidels, whose tenets were the denial of a moral government and a future state, were distinguished from the other sects by their ferocity. *De Bell. Jud.* lib. ii. He elsewhere remarks, that they were eminent for their inhumanity in their judicial capacity.

The benevolence and wisdom of the Author of christianity are eminently conspicuous in the laws he has enacted on this branch of morals; for, while he authorizes marriage, he restrains the vagrancy and caprice of the passions, by forbidding polygamy and divorce; and, well knowing that offences against the laws of chastity usually spring from an ill-regulated imagination, he inculcates purity of heart. Among innumerable benefits which the world has derived from the christian religion, a superior refinement in the sexual sentiments, a more equal and respectful treatment of women, greater dignity and permanence conferred on the institution of marriage, are not the least considerable; in consequence of which the purest affections, and the most sacred duties, are grafted on the stock of the strongest instincts.

The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is to rob mankind of these benefits, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality. In this spirit, Mr. HUME represents the private conduct of the profligate CHARLES, whose debaucheries polluted the age, as a just subject of panegyric. A disciple in the same school has lately had the unblushing effrontery to stigmatize marriage as the worst of all monopolies; and, in a narrative of his licentious amours, to make a formal apology for departing from his principles, by submitting to its restraints. The popular productions on the continent, which issue from the atheistical school, are incessantly directed to the same purpose.

Under every possible aspect in which infidelity can be viewed, it extends the dominion of sensuality: it repeals and abrogates every law by which divine revelation has, under such awful sanctions, restrained the indulgence of the passions. The disbelief of a supreme, omniscient Being, which it inculcates, releases its disciples from an attention to the *heart*, from every care but the preservation of outward decorum; and the exclusion of the devout affections, and an unseen world, leaves the mind immersed in visible, sensible objects.

There are two sorts of pleasures, corporeal and mental. Though we are indebted to the senses for all our perceptions *originally*, yet those which are at the farthest remove from their *immediate impressions* confer the most elevation on the character; since, in proportion as they are multiplied and augmented, the slavish subjection to the senses is subdued. Hence the true and only antidote to debasing sensuality is the possession of a fund of that *kind of enjoyment* which is independent of the corporeal appetites. Inferior in the perfection of several of his senses to different parts of the brute creation, the superiority of man over them all consists in his superior power of multiplying by new combinations his mental perceptions, and thereby of creating to himself resources of happiness separate from external sensation. In the scale of enjoyment, at the first remove from sense are the pleasures of reason and society; at the next are the pleasures

of devotion and religion. The former, though totally distinct from those of sense, are yet less perfectly adapted to moderate their excesses than the last, as they are in a great measure conversant with visible and sensible objects.—The religious affections and sentiments are, in fact, and were intended to be, the *proper antagonist* of sensuality; the great deliverer from the thraldom of the appetites, by opening a spiritual world, and inspiring hopes and fears, and consolations and joys, which bear no relation to the material and sensible universe. The criminal indulgence of sensual passions admits but of two modes of prevention; the establishment of such laws and maxims in society as shall render lewd profligacy impracticable or infamous, or the infusion of such principles and habits as shall render it distasteful. Human legislatures have encountered the disease in the first, the truths and sanctions of revealed religion in the last, of these methods: to both of which the advocates of modern infidelity are equally hostile.

So much has been said by many able writers to evince the inconceivable benefit of the marriage institution, that to hear it seriously attacked by men who style themselves philosophers, at the close of the eighteenth century, must awaken indignation and surprise. The object of this discourse leads us to direct our attention particularly to the influence of this institution on the *civilization* of the world.

From the records of revelation we learn that

marriage, or the *permanent union* of the sexes, was ordained by God, and existed, under different modifications, in the early infancy of mankind, without which they could never have emerged from barbarism. For, conceive only what eternal discord, jealousy, and violence would ensue, were the objects of the tenderest affections secured to their possessor by no law or tie of moral obligation: were domestic enjoyments disturbed by incessant fear, and licentiousness inflamed by hope. Who could find sufficient tranquillity of mind to enable him to plan or execute any continued scheme of action, or what room for arts, or sciences, or religion, or virtue, in that state in which the chief earthly happiness was exposed to every lawless invader; where one was racked with an incessant anxiety to keep what the other was equally eager to acquire? It is not probable in itself, independent of the light of scripture, that the benevolent Author of the human race ever placed them in so wretched a condition at first: it is certain they could not remain in it long, without being exterminated. Marriage, by shutting out these evils, and enabling every man to rest secure in his enjoyments, is the great civilizer of the world: with this security the mind is at liberty to expand in generous affections, and has leisure to look abroad, and engage in the pursuits of knowledge, science, and virtue.

Nor is it in this way only that marriage institutions are essential to the welfare of mankind.

They are sources of tenderness, as well as the guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes, there can be no permanent families: the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and, were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

Families are so many centres of attraction, which preserve mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive powers of selfishness. The order of nature is evermore from particulars to generals. As in the operations of intellect we proceed from the contemplation of individuals to the formation of general abstractions, so in the developement of the passions in like manner, we advance from private to public affections; from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind.*

In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender: for benevolent affections

* "Arctior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum: ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis, in exiguum angustumque concluditur. Nam cum sit hoc natura commune animantium, ut habeant lubidinem procreandi, prima societas in ipso conjugio est; proxima in liberis; deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ."—*Cic. de Off.* lib. i. cap. 17.

are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which it is the best possible school.

The advocates of infidelity invert this eternal order of nature. Instead of inculcating the private affections, as a discipline by which the mind is prepared for those of a more public nature, they set them in direct opposition to each other, they propose to build general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness, and to make us love the whole species more by loving every particular part of it less. In pursuit of this chimerical project, gratitude, humility, conjugal, parental, and filial affection, together with every other social disposition, are reprobated—virtue is limited to a passionate attachment to the general good. Is it not natural to ask, when all the tenderness of life is extinguished, and all the bands of society are untwisted, from whence this ardent affection for the general good is to spring?

When this savage philosophy has completed its work, when it has taught its disciple to look with perfect indifference on the offspring of his body, and the wife of his bosom, to estrange himself from his friends, insult his benefactors, and silence the pleadings of gratitude and pity; will he, by thus divesting himself of all that is human, be better prepared for the disinterested love of his

species? Will he become a philanthropist only because he has ceased to be a man? Rather, in this total exemption from all the feelings which humanize and soften, in this chilling frost of universal indifference, may we not be certain that selfishness, unmingled and uncontrolled, will assume the empire of his heart; and that, under pretence of advancing the general good, an object to which the fancy may give innumerable shapes, he will be prepared for the violation of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime? Extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections; so that to expect to reap the former from the extinction of the latter, is to oppose the means to the end; is as absurd as to attempt to reach the summit of the highest mountain without passing through the intermediate spaces, or to hope to attain the heights of science by forgetting the first elements of knowledge. These absurdities have sprung, however, in the advocates of infidelity, from an ignorance of human nature, sufficient to disgrace even those who did not style themselves philosophers. Presuming, contrary to the experience of every moment, that the affections are awakened by *reasoning*, and perceiving that the general good is an incomparably greater object *in itself* than the happiness of any limited number of individuals, they inferred nothing more was necessary than to exhibit it in its just dimensions, to draw the *affections* towards it; as though the fact of the superior populousness of

China to Great Britain needed but to be known, to render us indifferent to our domestic concerns, and lead us to direct all our anxiety to the prosperity of that vast but remote empire.

It is not the province of reason to awaken new passions, or open new sources of sensibility: but to direct us in the attainment of those objects which nature has already rendered pleasing, or to determine, among the interfering inclinations and passions which sway the mind, which are the fittest to be preferred.

Is a regard to the general good, then, you will reply, to be excluded from the motives of action? Nothing is more remote from my intention: but as the nature of this motive has, in my opinion, been much misunderstood by some good men, and abused by others, of a different description, to the worst of purposes, permit me to declare in a few words, what appears to me to be the truth on this subject.

The welfare of the whole system of being, must be allowed to be, in itself, the object of all others the most worthy of being pursued; so that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step *what action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong, an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws, and principles.

But this being impossible, since the good of the *whole* is a motive so loose and indeterminate, and

embraces such an infinity of relations, that before we could be certain what action it prescribed, the season of action would be past; to weak, short-sighted mortals, Providence has assigned a sphere of agency, less grand and extensive indeed, but better suited to their limited powers, by implanting certain *affections* which it is their duty to cultivate, and suggesting particular rules to which they are bound to conform. By these provisions the boundaries of virtue are easily ascertained, at the same time that its ultimate object, the good of the whole, is secured; for, since the happiness of the entire system results from the happiness of the several parts, the affections, which confine the attention *immediately* to the latter, conspire in the end to the promotion of the former; as the labourer, whose industry is limited to a corner of a large building, performs his part towards rearing the structure much more effectually than if he extended his care to the whole.

As the interest, however, of any limited number of persons may not only not contribute, but may possibly be directly opposed to the general good (the interest of a family, for example, to that of a province, or of a nation to that of the world), Providence has so ordered it, that, in a well-regulated mind, there springs up, as we have already seen, besides particular attachments, *an extended regard to the species*, whose office is two-fold: not to *destroy* and *extinguish* the more private affections, which is mental parricide; but first, as far as

is consistent with the claims of those who are immediately committed to our care, *to do good to all men;* secondly, to exercise a jurisdiction and control over the private affections, so as to prohibit their indulgence, whenever it would be attended with *manifest detriment* to the whole. Thus every part of our nature is brought into action; all the practical principles of the human heart find an element to move in, each in its different sort and manner conspiring, without mutual collisions, to maintain the harmony of the world and the happiness of the universe.*

* It is somewhat singular, that many of the fashionable infidels have hit upon a definition of virtue which perfectly coincides with that of certain metaphysical divines in America, first invented and defended by that most acute reasoner, JONATHAN EDWARDS. They both place virtue exclusively in a passion for the general good; or, as Mr. Edwards expresses it, *love to being in general;* so that our love is always to be proportioned to the magnitude of its object in the scale of being: which is liable to the objections I have already stated, as well as to many others which the limits of this note will not permit me to enumerate. Let it suffice to remark, (1.) That virtue, on these principles, is an utter impossibility: for the system of being, comprehending the great Supreme, is *infinite:* and, therefore, to maintain the proper proportion, the force of particular attachment must be infinitely less than the passion for the general good; but the limits of the human mind are not capable of any emotion so infinitely different *in degree.* (2.) Since *our views* of the extent of the universe are capable of perpetual enlargement, admitting the sum of existence is ever the same, we must return back at each step to diminish the strength of particular affections, or they will become disproportionate; and consequently, on these principles, vicious; so that the balance must be continually fluctuating, by the weights being taken out of one scale and put into the other. (3.) If virtue

Before I close this discourse, I cannot omit to mention three circumstances attending the propagation of infidelity by its present abettors, equally new and alarming.

1. It is the first attempt which has been ever witnessed, on an extensive scale, to establish *the principles of atheism;* the first effort which history has recorded to disannul and extinguish the belief of all superior powers; the consequence of which, should it succeed, would be to place mankind in a situation never before experienced, not even during the ages of pagan darkness. The system of poly-

consist *exclusively* in love to being in general, or attachment to the general good, the particular affections are, to every purpose of virtue, useless, and even pernicious; for their immediate, nay, their necessary tendency is to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale. To allege that the *general good* is promoted by them, will be of no advantage to the defence of this system, but the contrary, by confessing that a greater sum of happiness is attained by a deviation from, than an adherence to, its principles; unless its advocates mean by the love of being in general the same thing as the private affections, which is to confound all the distinctions of language, as well as all the operations of mind. Let it be remembered, we have no dispute respecting what is the ultimate end of virtue, which is allowed on both sides to be the greatest sum of happiness in the universe. The question is merely what is *virtue itself:* or, in other words, what are the means appointed for the attainment of that end?

There is little doubt, from some parts of Mr. Godwin's work, entitled, "Political Justice," as well as from his early habits of reading, that he was indebted to Mr. Edwards for his principal arguments against the private affections; though, with a daring consistency, he has pursued his principles to an extreme from which that most excellent man would have revolted with horror.

theism was as remote from modern infidelity as from true religion. Amidst that rubbish of superstition, the product of fear, ignorance, and vice, which had been accumulating for ages, some faint embers of sacred truth remained unextinguished; the interposition of unseen powers in the affairs of men was believed and revered, the sanctity of oaths was maintained, the idea of *revelation* and of *tradition*, as a source of religious knowledge, was familiar; a useful persuasion of the existence of a future world was kept alive, and the greater gods were looked up to as the guardians of the public welfare, the patrons of those virtues which promote the prosperity of states, and the avengers of injustice, perfidy, and fraud.*

The fundamental error of the whole system arose, as I conceive, from a mistaken pursuit of simplicity: from a wish to construct a moral system, without leaving sufficient scope for the infinite variety of moral phenomena and mental combination; in consequence of which its advocates were induced to place virtue *exclusively* in some *one disposition* of mind: and, since the passion for the general good is undeniably the *noblest* and most extensive of all others, when it was once resolved to place virtue in any *one thing*, there remained little room to hesitate which should be preferred. It might have been worth while to reflect, that in the natural world there are two kinds of attraction; one, which holds the several *parts* of individual bodies in contact; another, which maintains the union of bodies themselves with the general system: and that, though the union in the former case is much more *intimate* than in the latter, each is equally essential to the order of the world. Similar to this is the relation which the public and private affections bear to each other, and their use in the moral system.

* The testimony of Polybius to the beneficial effects which resulted from the system of pagan superstition, in fortifying the

Of whatever benefit superstition might formerly be productive, by the scattered particles of truth which it contained, these advantages can now only be reaped from the soil of true religion; nor is there any other alternative left than the belief of christianity, or absolute atheism. In the revolutions of the human mind, exploded *opinions* are often revived; but an exploded superstition never

sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a sceptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion.

"But among all the useful institutions (says Polybius) that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods: and that which other men regard as an object of disgrace, appears, in my judgment, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition, which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded.

"The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather *are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity*, in endeavouring to extirpate these opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be intrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written sureties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand,

recovers its credit. The pretension to divine revelation is so august and commanding, that when its falsehood is once discerned, it is covered with all the ignominy of detected imposture; it falls from such a height (to change the figure), that it is inevitably crumbled into atoms. Religions, whether false or true, are not creatures of arbitrary institution. After discrediting the principles of piety, should our modern free-thinkers find it necessary,

who in the course of their magistracies and in embassies disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on, by the single obligation of an oath, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty. And, as in other states, a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so among the Romans it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime."—*Hampton's Polybius*, Vol. III. book vi.

Though the system of paganism is justly condemned by reason and scripture, yet it assumed as true several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage, and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility, which is well stated by the *great and judicious* Hooker in treating on this subject. "Seeing, therefore, it doth thus appear, (says that venerable author,) that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion: that religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; that men's desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and that whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error: because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honour *true religion* as their parent, and all well ordered commonweals to love her as their chiefest stay."—*Eccles. Pol.* book v.

in order to restrain the excesses of ferocity, to seek for a substitute in some popular superstition, it will prove a vain and impracticable attempt: they may recall the names, restore the altars, and revive the ceremonies; but to rekindle the spirit of heathenism will exceed their power; because it is impossible to enact ignorance by law, or to repeal by legislative authority the dictates of reason and the light of science.

2. The efforts of infidels to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people, is another alarming symptom peculiar to the present time. HUME, BOLINGBROKE, and GIBBON, addressed themselves solely to the more polished classes of the community, and would have thought their refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples from among the populace. Infidelity has lately grown condescending; bred in the speculations of a daring philosophy, immured at first in the cloisters of the learned, and afterwards nursed in the lap of voluptuousness and of courts; having at length reached its full maturity, it boldly ventures to challenge the suffrages of the people, solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and seeks to draw whole nations to its standard.

It is not difficult to account for this new state of things. While infidelity was rare, it was employed as the instrument of literary vanity; its wide diffusion having disqualified it for answering that purpose, it is now adopted as the organ of political convulsion. Literary distinction is con-

ferred by the approbation of a few; but the total subversion and overthrow of society demand the concurrence of millions.

3. The infidels of the present day are the first sophists who have presumed to innovate in the very *substance* of morals. The disputes on moral questions, hitherto agitated amongst philosophers, have respected the *grounds* of duty, not the *nature of duty itself*; or they have been merely metaphysical, and related to the *history* of moral sentiments in the mind, the sources and principles from which they were most easily deduced; they never turned on the quality of those dispositions and actions which were to be denominated virtuous. In the firm persuasion that the love and fear of the Supreme Being, the sacred observation of promises and oaths, reverence to magistrates, obedience to parents, gratitude to benefactors, conjugal fidelity, and parental tenderness, were primary virtues, and the chief support of every commonwealth, they were unanimous. The curse denounced upon such as remove ancient land-marks, upon those who call good evil, and evil good, put light for darkness, and darkness for light, who employ their faculties to subvert the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, and thus to poison the streams of virtue at their source, falls with accumulated weight on the advocates of modern infidelity, and on them alone.

Permit me to close this discourse with a few serious reflections.—There is much, it must be

confessed, in the apostasy of multitudes, and the rapid progress of infidelity, to awaken our fears for the virtue of the rising generation; but nothing to shake our faith; nothing which scripture itself does not give us room to expect. The features which compose the character of apostates, their profaneness, presumption, lewdness, impatience of subordination, restless appetite for change, vain pretensions to freedom and to emancipate the world, while themselves are the slaves of lust, the weapons with which they attack christianity, and the snares they spread for the unwary, are depicted in the clearest colours by the pencil of prophecy: *Knowing this first* (says Peter), *that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.** In the same epistle he more fully describes the persons he alludes to; *as chiefly them which walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; sporting themselves in their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.*† Of the same characters Jude admonishes us *to remember that they were foretold as mockers,*

* 2 Pet. iii. 3. † 2 Pet. ii. 10, &c.

who should be in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they (he adds) *who separate themselves* (by apostasy), *sensual, not having the Spirit.* Infidelity is an evil of short duration. "*It has* (as a judicious writer observes) *no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a* BEAST; *but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast: an excrescence which though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it.*"* Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a system which, by vilifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which, equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendency. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise, and impetuous in its progress, it resembles a mountain-torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating; but, being fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off, and disappears. By permitting to a certain extent the prevalence of infidelity, Providence is preparing new triumphs for religion. In asserting its authority, the preachers of the gospel have hitherto found it necessary to weigh the prospects of immor-

* See an excellent work, by the Rev. Andrew Fuller, entitled, "The Gospel its own Witness." This valuable piece is reprinted in vol. i. of the uniform edition of Mr. Fuller's Works, now publishing by his son, Mr. A. G. Fuller.—ED.

tality against the interests of time; to strip the world of its charms, to insist on the deceitfulness of pleasure, the unsatisfying nature of riches, the emptiness of grandeur, and the nothingness of a mere worldly life. Topics of this nature will always have their use; but it is not by such representations alone that the importance of religion is evinced. The prevalence of impiety has armed us with new weapons in its defence.

Religion being primarily intended to make men *wise unto salvation*, the support it ministers to social order, the stability it confers on government and laws, is a *subordinate species* of advantage which we should have continued to enjoy, without reflecting on its cause, but for the developement of deistical principles, and the experiment which has been made of their effects in a neighbouring country. It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness; and christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of religion but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favourable ear to these pretensions. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse,* while

* It is worthy of attention that Mercier, a warm advocate of the French Revolution, and a professed deist, in his recent work, entitled, "New Paris," acknowledges and laments the extinction of religion in France. "*We have*," says he, "*in proscribing su-*

atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of their thrones.

We might ask the patrons of infidelity what fury impels them to attempt the subversion of christianity? Is it that they have discovered a better system? To what virtues are their principles favourable? Or is there one which christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which their party can boast? Have they discovered a more excellent rule of life, or a better hope in death, than that which the Scriptures suggest? Above all, what are the pretensions on which they rest their claims to be the guides of mankind; or which imbolden them to expect we should trample upon the experience of ages, and abandon a religion which has been attested by a

perstition, destroyed all religious sentiment; but this is not the way to regenerate the world." See Appendix to the 30th vol. of the Monthly Review.

train of miracles and prophecies, in which millions of our forefathers have found a refuge in every trouble, and consolation in the hour of death; a religion which has been adorned with the highest sanctity of character and splendour of talents, which enrols amongst its disciples the names of BACON, NEWTON, and LOCKE, the glory of their species, and to which these illustrious men were proud to dedicate the last and best fruits of their immortal genius?

If the question at issue is to be decided by argument, nothing can be added to the triumph of christianity; if by an appeal to authority, what have our adversaries to oppose to these great names? Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons, have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited; what distant climes have *they* explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization? Or will they rather choose to wave their pretensions to this extraordinary, and in their eyes, eccentric species of benevolence, (for infidels, we know, are sworn enemies to enthusiasm of every sort,) and rest their character on their political exploits; on their efforts to reanimate the virtue of a sinking state, to restrain licentiousness, to calm the

tumult of popular fury; and, by inculcating the spirit of justice, moderation, and pity for fallen greatness, to mitigate the inevitable horrors of revolution? our adversaries will at least have the discretion, if not the modesty, to recede from the test.

More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not pierce! Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!

Having been led by the nature of the subject to consider chiefly the manner in which sceptical impiety affects the welfare of states, it is the more requisite to warn you against that most fatal mistake of regarding religion as an engine of policy; and to recall to your recollection that the concern we have in it is much more as *individuals* than as *collective bodies*, and far less temporal than eternal. The happiness which it confers in the present life

comprehends the blessings which it scatters by the way in its march to immortality. That future condition of being which it ascertains, and for which its promises and truths are meant to prepare us, is the ultimate end of human societies, the final scope and object of present existence; in comparison of which all the revolutions of nations, and all the vicissitudes of time, are light and transitory. *Godliness has*, it is true, *the promise of the life that now is;* but chiefly *of that which is to come.* Other acquisitions may be requisite to make men great; but, be assured, the religion of Jesus is alone sufficient to make them good and happy. Powerful sources of consolation in sorrow, unshaken fortitude amidst the changes and perturbations of the world, humility remote from meanness, and dignity unstained by pride, contentment in every station, passions pure and calm, with habitual serenity, the full enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the dread of dissolution or the fear of an hereafter, are its invaluable gifts. To these enjoyments, however, you will necessarily continue strangers, unless you resign yourselves wholly to its power; for the consolations of religion are reserved to reward, to sweeten, and to stimulate obedience. Many, without renouncing the profession of christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that, conscious they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without

terror. It haunts their imagination, instead of tranquillizing their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their troubles, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended betwixt opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds; and neither enjoy the pleasures of sin, nor the peace of piety. Is it surprising to find a mind thus bewildered in uncertainty, and dissatisfied with itself, courting deception, and embracing with eagerness every pretext to mutilate the claims and enervate the authority of christianity; forgetting that it is of the very essence of the religious principle to preside and control, and that it is impossible to *serve God and mammon?* It is this class of professors who are chiefly in danger of being entangled in the snares of infidelity.

The champions of infidelity have much more reason to be ashamed than to boast of such converts. For what can be a stronger presumption of the falsehood of a system, than that it is the opiate of a restless conscience; that it prevails with minds of a certain description, not because they find it true, but because they feel it necessary; and that in adopting it they consult less with their reason than with their vices and their fears? It

requires but little sagacity to foresee that speculations which originate in guilt must end in ruin. Infidels are not themselves satisfied with the truth of their system: for had they any settled assurance of its principles, in consequence of calm dispassionate investigation, they would never disturb the quiet of the world by their attempts to proselyte; but would lament their own infelicity, in not being able to perceive sufficient evidence for the truth of religion, which furnishes such incentives to virtue, and inspires such exalted hopes. Having nothing to substitute in the place of religion, it is absurd to suppose that, in opposition to the collective voice of every country, age, and time, proclaiming its necessity, solicitude for the welfare of mankind impels them to destroy it.

To very different motives must their conduct be imputed. More like conspirators than philosophers, in spite of the darkness with which they endeavour to surround themselves, some rays of unwelcome conviction will penetrate, some secret apprehensions that all is not right will make themselves felt, which they find nothing so effectual to quell as an attempt to enlist fresh disciples, who, in exchange for new principles, impart confidence, and diminish fear. For the same reason it is seldom they attack christianity by argument: their favourite weapons are ridicule, obscenity, and blasphemy; as the most miserable outcasts of society are, of all men, found most to delight in vulgar merriment and senseless riot.

JESUS CHRIST seems to have *his fan in his hand, to be thoroughly purging his floor;* and nominal christians will probably be scattered like chaff. But has *real* christianity any thing to fear? Have not the degenerate manners and corrupt lives of multitudes in the visible church, been, on the contrary, the principal occasion of scandal and offence? Infidelity, without intending it, is gradually removing this reproach: possessing the property of attracting to itself the morbid humours which pervade the church, until the christian profession, on the one hand, is reduced to a sound and healthy state, and scepticism, on the other, exhibits nothing but a mass of putridity and disease.

In a view of the final issue of the contest, we should find little cause to lament the astonishing prevalence of infidelity, but for a solicitude for the rising generation, to whom its principles are recommended by two motives, with young minds the most persuasive; the love of independence, and the love of pleasure. With respect to the first, we would earnestly entreat the young to remember that, by the unanimous consent of all ages, modesty, docility, and reverence to superior years, and to parents above all, have been considered as their *appropriate virtues,* a guard assigned by the immutable laws of God and nature on the inexperience of youth; and with respect to the second, that christianity prohibits no pleasures that are innocent, lays no restraints that are capricious; but that the sobriety and purity which it enjoins, by

strengthening the intellectual powers, and preserving the faculties of mind and body in undiminished vigour, lay *the surest* foundation of present peace and future eminence. At such a season as this, it becomes an urgent duty on parents, guardians, and tutors, to watch, not only over the morals, but the principles of those committed to their care; to make it appear that a concern for their eternal welfare is their chief concern; and to imbue them early with that knowledge of the evidences of christianity, and that profound reverence for the Scriptures, that, with the blessing of God (which, with submission, they may then expect), *may keep them from this hour of temptation that has come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.*

To an attentive observer of the signs of the times, it will appear one of the most extraordinary phenomena of this eventful crisis, that, amidst the ravages of atheism and infidelity, real religion is evidently on the increase. *The kingdom of God,* we know, *cometh not with observation;* but still there are not wanting manifest tokens of its approach. The personal appearance of the Son of God was announced by the shaking of nations; his spiritual kingdom, in all probability, will be established in the midst of similar convulsions and disorders. The blasphemous impiety of the enemies of God, as well as the zealous efforts of his sincere worshippers, will doubtless be overruled to accomplish the purposes of his unerring providence: while, in

inflicting the chastisements of offended Deity on corrupt communities and nations, infidelity marks its progress by devastation and ruin, by the prostration of thrones and concussion of kingdoms; thus appalling the inhabitants of the world, and compelling them to take refuge in the church of God, the true sanctuary; the stream of divine knowledge, unobserved, is flowing in new channels, winding its course among humble valleys, refreshing thirsty deserts, and enriching with far other and higher blessings than those of commerce, the most distant climes and nations, until, agreeably to the prediction of prophecy, the *knowledge of the Lord shall fill and cover the whole earth.*

Within the limits of this discourse it would be impracticable to exhibit the evidences of christianity; nor is it my design: but there is one consideration, resulting immediately from my text, which is entitled to great weight with all who believe in the one living and true God as the sole object of worship. The Ephesians, in common with other Gentiles, are described in the text as being, previous to their conversion, *without God in the world;* that is, without any just and solid acquaintance with his character, destitute of the knowledge of his will, the institutes of his worship, and the hopes of his favour; to the truth of which representation whoever possesses the slightest acquaintance with pagan antiquity must assent. Nor is it a fact less incontestable, that, while human philosophy was never able to abolish

idolatry in a single village, the promulgation of the gospel overthrew it in a great part (and that the most enlightened) of the world. If our belief in the unity and perfections of God, together with his moral government, and exclusive right to the worship of mankind, be founded in truth, they cannot reasonably be denied to be truths of the first importance, and infinitely to outweigh the greatest discoveries in science; because they turn the hopes, fears, and interests of man into a totally different channel from that in which they must otherwise flow. Wherever these principles are first admitted, there a new dominion is erected, and a new system of laws established.

But since all events are under divine direction, is it reasonable to suppose that the great Parent, after suffering his creatures to continue for ages ignorant of his true character, should at length in the course of his providence fix upon falsehood, and that alone, as the effectual method of making himself known; and that what the virtuous exercise of reason in the best and wisest men was never permitted to accomplish, he should confer on fraud and delusion the honour of effecting? It ill comports with the majesty of truth, or the character of God, to believe that he has built the noblest superstructure on the weakest foundation; or reduced mankind to the miserable alternative, either of remaining destitute of the knowledge of himself, or of deriving it from the polluted source of impious imposture. We therefore feel ourselves

justified on this occasion, in adopting the triumphant boast of the great apostle: *Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

NOTE TO PAGE 46

The fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the christian priesthood, &c.—The author finds he has given great offence to some friends whom he highly esteems, by applying the term *christian priesthood* to the popish clergy. He begs leave to make a remark or two by way of apology.

1. It is admitted by all candid protestants that salvation is attainable in the Roman-catholic church; but he should be glad to be informed what part of the christian covenant entitles us to expect the salvation of those (where the gospel is promulgated) who are not even a branch of the visible church of Christ. The papistical tenets are either *fundamentally* erroneous, on which supposition it is certain no papist can be saved; or their errors must be consistent with christian faith, and, consequently, cannot be a valid reason for excluding those who maintain them from being a part (a most corrupt part, if you please, but still a part) of the christian church.

2. The popish clergy were persecuted under the *character of christians*, not under the notion of heretics or schismatics. They who were the subjects of persecution were certainly the best judges of its aim and direction; and when the Archbishop of Paris and others endeavoured to screen themselves from its effects by a recantation, what did they recant? Was it popery? No; but the profession of christianity. These apostates, doubtless, meant to remove the ground of offence, which, in their opinion, was the christian profession. If the soundest ecclesiastical historians have not refused the honours of martyrdom to such as suffered in the cause of truth amongst the Gnostics, it ill becomes the liberality of the present age to contemplate, with sullen indifference, or malicious joy, the sufferings of conscientious catholics.

3. At the period to which the author refers, christian worship of *every kind* was prohibited; while, in solemn mockery of

religion, adoration was paid to a strumpet, under the title of the Goddess of Reason. Is it necessary to prove that men who were thus abandoned, must be hostile to true religion under every form? Or, if there be any gradations in their abhorrence, to that most which is the most pure and perfect? Are atheism and obscenity more congenial to the protestant than to the popish profession? To have incurred the hatred of the ruling party of France at the season alluded to, is an honour which the author would be sorry to resign, as the exclusive boast of the church of Rome. To have been the object of the partiality of such bloody and inhuman monsters, would have been a stain upon protestants which the virtue of ages could not obliterate.

REFLECTIONS ON WAR:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE,

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1802.

BEING THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING FOR A GENERAL PEACE.

PREFACE.

THE writer is not aware that the sentiments contained in this discourse require apology, though he is convinced he needs the candour of the public with respect to the imperfect manner in which they are exhibited. If it be deemed an impropriety to introduce political reflections in a discourse from the pulpit, he wishes it to be remembered that these are of a general nature, and such as, rising out of the subject and the occasion, he cannot suppose it improper for a christian minister to impress. With party politics he is determined to have as little to do as possible, and, in the exercise of his professional duties, nothing at all. Conscious that what is here advanced was meant neither to flatter nor offend any party, he is not very solicitous about those misconstructions or misrepresentations to which the purest intentions are exposed. It will probably be objected, that he has dwelt too much on the horrors of war for a Thanksgiving Sermon; in answer to which he begs it may be remembered, that, as the pleasure of rest is relative to fatigue, and that of ease to pain, so the blessing of peace, considered *merely as peace*, is exactly proportioned

to the calamity of war. As this, whenever it is justifiable, arises out of a *necessity*, not a desire of acquisition, its natural and proper effect is merely to replace a nation in the state it was in before that necessity was incurred, or, in other words, to recover what was lost, and secure what was endangered. The writer intended to add something more on the moral effects of war, (a subject which he should be glad to see undertaken by some superior hand,) but found it would not be compatible with the limits he determined to assign himself. The sermon having been preached for the benefit of a Benevolent Society, instituted at Cambridge, will sufficiently account for the observations on charity to the poor, introduced towards the close. The good which has already arisen from the exertions of that society is more than equal to its most sanguine expectations; and should this publication contribute in the smallest degree to the formation of similar ones in other parts, the author will think himself abundantly compensated for the little trouble it has cost him.

CAMBRIDGE,
June 19, 1802.

A SERMON.

PSALM xlvi. 8, 9.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

To the merciful interposition of Providence we owe it that our native land has been exempted for nearly sixty years from being the seat of war; our insular situation having preserved us, under God, from foreign invasion; the admirable balance of our constitution from internal discord. We have heard indeed of the ravages of armies, and the depopulation of countries, but they have merely supplied a topic of discourse, and have occasioned no serious alarm. The military system, as far as it has appeared in England, has been seen only on the side of its gaiety and pomp, a pleasing shew, without imparting any idea of its horrors; and the rumours of battles and slaughter conveyed from afar have rather amused our leisure, than

disturbed our repose. While we cannot be too thankful for our security, it has placed us under a disadvantage in one respect, which is, that we have learned to contemplate war with too much indifference, and to feel for the unhappy countries immediately involved in it too little compassion. Had we ever experienced its calamities, we should celebrate the restoration of peace on this occasion with warmer emotions than there is room to apprehend are at present felt. To awaken those sentiments of gratitude which we are this day assembled to express, it will be proper briefly to recall to your attention some of the dreadful effects of hostility. Real war, my brethren, is a very different thing from that painted image of it, which you see on a parade, or at a review: it is the most awful scourge that Providence employs for the chastisement of man. It is the garment of vengeance with which the Deity arrays himself, when he comes forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth. It is *the day of the Lord, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger.* It is thus described by the sublimest of prophets: *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty: therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt; pangs and sorrows shall take hold on them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land*

desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light.

War may be considered in two views, as it affects the happiness, and as it affects the virtue of mankind; as a source of misery, and as a source of crimes.

1. *Though we must all die,* as the woman of Tekoa said, *and are as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up;* yet it is impossible for a humane mind to contemplate the rapid extinction of innumerable lives without concern. To perish in a moment, to be hurried instantaneously, without preparation and without warning, into the presence of the Supreme Judge, has something in it inexpressibly awful and affecting. Since the commencement of those hostilities which are now so happily closed, it may be reasonably conjectured that not less than half a million of our fellow-creatures have fallen a sacrifice. Half a million of beings, sharers of the same nature, warmed with the same hopes, and as fondly attached to life as ourselves, have been prematurely swept into the grave; each of whose deaths has pierced the heart of a wife, a parent, a brother, or a sister. How many of these scenes of complicated distress have occurred since the commencement of hostilities, is known only to Omniscience: that they are innumerable cannot admit of a doubt.

In some parts of Europe, perhaps, there is scarcely a family exempt.

Though the whole race of man is doomed to dissolution, and we are all hastening to our long home; yet at each successive moment, life and death seem to divide betwixt them the dominion of mankind, and life to have the larger share. It is otherwise in war: death reigns there without a rival, and without control. War is the work, the element, or rather the sport and triumph, of death, who glories not only in the extent of his conquest, but in the richness of his spoil. In the other methods of attack, in the other forms which death assumes, the feeble and the aged, who at the best can live but a short time, are usually the victims; here it is the vigorous and the strong. It is remarked by an ancient historian, that in peace children bury their parents, in war parents bury their children:* nor is the difference small. Children lament their parents, sincerely indeed, but with that moderate and tranquil sorrow, which it is natural for those to feel who are conscious of retaining many tender ties, many animating prospects. Parents mourn for their children with the bitterness of despair; the aged parent, the widowed mother, loses, when she is deprived of

* In the former editions this sentiment was imputed to Homer: the truth, however, is, as Mr. Hall was afterwards aware, that it was due to his early favourite Herodotus, and occurs in the *Clio*. Ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ (εἰρήνῃ) οἱ παῖδες τοὺς πατέρας θάπτουσι· ἐν δὲ τῷ (πολέμῳ) οἱ πατέρες τοὺς παῖδας. Cap. 87. Ed.

her children, every thing but the capacity of suffering; her heart, withered and desolate, admits no other object, cherishes no other hope. *It is Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.*

But, to confine our attention to the number of the slain, would give us a very inadequate idea of the ravages of the sword. The lot of those who perish instantaneously, may be considered, apart from religious prospects, as comparatively happy, since they are exempt from those lingering diseases and slow torments to which others are liable. We cannot see an individual expire, though a stranger or an enemy, without being sensibly moved, and prompted by compassion to lend him every assistance in our power. Every trace of resentment vanishes in a moment: every other emotion gives way to pity and terror. In these last extremities, we remember nothing but the respect and tenderness due to our common nature. What a scene, then, must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance, and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amidst the trampling of horses, and the insults of an enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy, and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance, through roads almost impassable, they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick, where

the variety of distress baffles all the efforts of humanity and skill, and renders it impossible to give to each the attention he demands. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister, is near to soothe their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings, or mingled with your dust!

We must remember, however, that as a very small proportion of a military life is spent in actual combat, so it is a very small part of its miseries which must be ascribed to this source. More are consumed by the rust of inactivity than by the edge of the sword; confined to a scanty or unwholesome diet, exposed in sickly climates, harassed with tiresome marches and perpetual alarms, their life is a continual scene of hardships and dangers. They grow familiar with hunger, cold, and watchfulness. Crowded into hospitals and prisons, contagion spreads amongst their ranks, till the ravages of disease exceed those of the enemy.

We have hitherto only adverted to the sufferings of those who are engaged in the profession of arms, without taking into our account the situation of the countries which are the scene of hostilities. How dreadful to hold every thing at the mercy of an enemy, and to receive life itself as a boon dependent on the sword. How boundless the fears which such a situation must inspire, where

the issues of life and death are determined by no known laws, principles, or customs, and no conjecture can be formed of our destiny, except as far as it is dimly deciphered in characters of blood, in the dictates of revenge, and the caprices of power. Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathize with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.

If we consider the maxims of war which prevailed in the ancient world, and which still prevail in many barbarous nations, we perceive that those who survived the fury of battle and the insolence of victory, were only reserved for more durable calamities; swept into hopeless captivity, exposed in markets, or plunged in mines, with the melancholy distinction bestowed on princes and warriors, after appearing in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, of being conducted to instant death. The contemplation of such scenes as these forces on us this awful reflection, that neither the fury of wild beasts, the concussions of the earth, nor the violence of tempests, are to be compared to the ravages of arms; and that nature in her utmost extent, or, more properly, divine justice in its utmost severity, has supplied no enemy to man so terrible as man.

Still, however, it would be happy for mankind if the effects of national hostility terminated here; but the fact is, that they who are farthest removed from its immediate desolations, share largely in the calamity. They are drained of the most precious part of their population, their youth, to repair the waste made by the sword. They are drained of their wealth, by the prodigious expense incurred in the equipment of fleets, and the subsistence of armies in remote parts. The accumulation of debt and taxes diminishes the public strength, and depresses private industry. An augmentation in the price of the necessaries of life, inconvenient to all

classes, falls with peculiar weight on the labouring poor, who must carry their industry to market every day, and therefore cannot wait for that advance of price which gradually attaches to every other article. Of all people, the poor are, on this account, the greatest sufferers by war, and have the most reason to rejoice in the restoration of peace. As it is the farthest from my purpose to awaken unpleasing reflections, or to taint the pure satisfaction of this day, by the smallest infusion of political acrimony, it will not be expected I should apply these remarks to the peculiar circumstances of this country, though it would be unpardonable in us to forget (for to forget our dangers is to forget our mercies) how nearly we have been reduced to famine, principally, it is true, through a failure in the crops, but greatly aggravated, no doubt, in its pressure, by our being engaged in a war of unexampled expenditure and extent.

In commercial states, (of which Europe principally consists,) whatever interrupts their intercourse is a fatal blow to national prosperity. Such states, having a mutual dependence on each other, the effects of their hostility extend far beyond the parties engaged in the contest. If there be a country highly commercial, which has a decided superiority in wealth and industry, together with a fleet which enables it to protect its trade, the commerce of such a country may survive the shock, but it is at the expense of the commerce of all other nations; a painful reflection to a generous

mind. Even there the usual channels of trade being closed, it is some time before it can force a new passage for itself; previous to which, an almost total stagnation takes place, by which multitudes are impoverished, and thousands of the industrious poor, being thrown out of employment, are plunged into wretchedness and beggary. Who can calculate the number of industrious families in different parts of the world, to say nothing of our own country, who have been reduced to poverty, from this cause, since the peace of Europe was interrupted?

The plague of a widely extended war possesses, in fact, a sort of omnipresence, by which it makes itself everywhere felt; for while it gives up myriads to slaughter in one part of the globe, it is busily employed in scattering over countries, exempt from its immediate desolations, the seeds of famine, pestilence, and death.

If statesmen, if christian statesmen, at least, had a proper feeling on this subject, and would open their hearts to the reflections which such scenes must inspire, instead of rushing eagerly to arms from the thirst of conquest, or the thirst of gain, would they not hesitate long, would they not try every expedient, every lenient art consistent with national honour, before they ventured on this desperate remedy, or rather, before they plunged into this gulf of horror?

It is time to proceed to another view of the subject, which is, the influence of national warfare

on the morals of mankind: a topic on which I must be very brief, but which it would be wrong to omit, as it supplies an additional reason to every good man for the love of peace.

The contests of nations are both the offspring and the parent of injustice. The word of God ascribes the existence of war to the disorderly passions of men. *Whence come wars and fighting among you?* saith the apostle James; *come they not from your lusts that war in your members?* It is certain two nations cannot engage in hostilities but one party must be guilty of injustice; and if the magnitude of crimes is to be estimated by a regard to their consequences, it is difficult to conceive an action of equal guilt with the wanton violation of peace. Though something must generally be allowed for the complexness and intricacy of national claims, and the consequent liability to deception, yet where the guilt of an unjust war is clear and manifest, it sinks every other crime into insignificance. If the existence of war always *implies* injustice, in one at least of the parties concerned, it is also the fruitful parent of crimes. It reverses, with respect to its objects, all the rules of morality. It is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue. It is a system out of which almost all the virtues are excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are incorporated. Whatever renders human nature amiable or respectable, whatever engages love or confidence, is sacrificed at its shrine. In instructing

us to consider a portion of our fellow-creatures as the proper objects of enmity, it removes, as far as they are concerned, the basis of all society, of all civilization and virtue; for the basis of these is the good-will due to every individual of the species, as being a part of ourselves. From this principle all the rules of social virtue emanate. Justice and humanity in their utmost extent are nothing more than the practical application of this great law. The sword, and that alone, cuts asunder the bond of consanguinity which unites man to man. As it immediately aims at the extinction of life, it is next to impossible, upon the principle that every thing may be lawfully done to him whom we have a right to kill, to set limits to military licence; for, when men pass from the dominion of reason to that of force, whatever restraints are attempted to be laid on the passions will be feeble and fluctuating. Though we must applaud, therefore, the attempts of the humane Grotius, to blend maxims of humanity with military operations, it is to be feared they will never coalesce, since the former imply the subsistence of those ties which the latter suppose to be dissolved. Hence the morality of peaceful times is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter, to inflict injuries. The former commands us to succour the oppressed; the latter to overwhelm the defenceless. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter to make themselves terrible even to strangers. The rules

of morality will not suffer us to promote the dearest interest by falsehood; the maxims of war applaud it when employed in the destruction of others. That a familiarity with such maxims must tend to harden the heart, as well as to pervert the moral sentiments, is too obvious to need illustration. The natural consequence of their prevalence is an unfeeling and unprincipled ambition, with an idolatry of talents, and a contempt of virtue; whence the esteem of mankind is turned from the humble, the beneficent, and the good, to men who are qualified by a genius fertile in expedients, a courage that is never appalled, and a heart that never pities, to become the destroyers of the earth. While the philanthropist is devising means to mitigate the evils and augment the happiness of the world, a fellow worker together with God, in exploring and giving effect to the benevolent tendencies of nature, the warrior is revolving, in the gloomy recesses of his capacious mind, plans of future devastation and ruin. Prisons crowded with captives, cities emptied of their inhabitants, fields desolate and waste, are among his proudest trophies. The fabric of his fame is cemented with tears and blood; and if his name is wafted to the ends of the earth, it is in the shrill cry of suffering humanity; in the curses and imprecations of those whom his sword has reduced to despair.

Let me not be understood to involve in this guilt every man who engages in war, or to assert that war itself is in all cases unlawful. The

injustice of mankind, hitherto incurable, renders it in some instances necessary, and therefore lawful; but unquestionably, these instances are much more rare than the practice of the world and its loose casuistry would lead us to suppose.

Detesting war, considered as a trade or profession, and conceiving conquerors to be the enemies of their species, it appears* to me that nothing is more suitable to the office of a christian minister, than an attempt, however feeble, to take off the colours from false greatness, and to shew the deformity which its delusive splendour too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society. Nor is there any more necessary. For, dominion affording a plain and palpable distinction, and every man feeling the effects of power, however incompetent he may be to judge of wisdom and goodness, the character of a hero, there is reason to fear, will always be too dazzling. The sense of his injustice will be too often lost in the admiration of his success.

In contemplating the influence of war on public morals, it would be unpardonable not to remark the effects it never fails to produce in those parts of the world which are its immediate seat. The injury which the morals of a people sustain from an invading army is prodigious. The agitation

* "Non est inter artificia bellum, imo res est tam horrenda, ut eam nisi summa necessitas, aut vera caritas, honestam efficere queat. Augustino judice, militare non est delictum, sed propter prædam militare peccatum est." *Grot. de Jure Bell.* lib. ii. c. 25.

and suspense universally prevalent are incompatible with every thing which requires calm thought or serious reflection. In such a situation is it any wonder the duties of piety fall into neglect, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, and the gates of Zion mourn and are desolate? Familiarized to the sight of rapine and slaughter, the people must acquire a hard and unfeeling character. The precarious tenure by which every thing is held during the absence of laws, must impair confidence; the sudden revolutions of fortune must be infinitely favourable to fraud and injustice. He who reflects on these consequences, will not think it too much to affirm, that the injury the virtue of a people sustains from invasion is greater than that which affects their property or their lives. He will perceive, that by such a calamity the seeds of order, virtue, and piety, which it is the first care of education to implant and mature, are swept away as by a hurricane.

Though the sketch which I have attempted to give of the miseries which ensue, when nation lifts up arms against nation, is faint and imperfect, it is yet sufficient to imprint on our minds a salutary horror of such scenes, and a gratitude, warm, I trust, and sincere, to that gracious Providence which has brought them to a close.

To acknowledge the hand of God is a duty indeed at all times; but there are seasons when it is made so bare, that it is next to impossible, and therefore signally criminal, to overlook it. It

is almost unnecessary to add that the present is one of those seasons. If ever we are expected to *be still, and know that he is God,* it is on the present occasion, after a crisis so unexampled in the annals of the world; during which scenes have been disclosed, and events have arisen, so much more astonishing than any that history had recorded or romance had feigned, that we are compelled to lose sight of human agency, and to behold the Deity acting as it were apart and alone.

The contest in which we have been lately engaged is distinguished from all others in modern times by the number of nations it embraced, and the animosity with which it was conducted. Making its first appearance in the centre of the civilized world, like a fire kindled in the thickest part of a forest, it spread during ten years on every side; it burnt in all directions, gathering fresh fury in its progress, till it enwrapped the whole of Europe in its flames; an awful spectacle, not only to the inhabitants of the earth, but in the eyes of superior beings! What place can we point out to which its effects have not extended? Where is the nation, the family, the individual I might almost say, who has not felt its influence? It is not, my brethren, the termination of an ordinary contest which we are assembled this day to commemorate; it is an event which includes for the present (may it long perpetuate) the tranquillity of Europe and the pacification of the world. We are met to express our

devout gratitude to God for putting a period to a war, the most eventful perhaps that has been witnessed for a thousand years, a war which has transformed the face of Europe, removed the landmarks of nations and limits of empire.

The spirit of animosity with which it has been conducted is another circumstance which has eminently distinguished the recent contest. As it would be highly improper to enter, on this occasion, (were my abilities equal to the task,) into a discussion of those principles which have divided, and probably will long divide, the sentiments of men, it may be sufficient to observe, in general, that what principally contributed to make the contest so peculiarly violent, was a discordancy betwixt the opinions and the institutions of society. A daring spirit of speculation, untempered, alas! by humility and devotion, has been the distinguishing feature of the present times. While it confined itself to the exposure of the corruptions of religion and the abuses of power, it met with some degree of countenance from the wise and good in all countries, who were ready to hope it was the instrument destined by Providence to meliorate the condition of mankind. How great was their disappointment when they perceived that pretensions to philanthropy were, with many, only a mask assumed for the more successful propagation of impiety and anarchy!

From the prevalence of this spirit, however, a schism was gradually formed between the adherents

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of those, who, styling themselves philosophers, were intent on some great change, which they were little careful to explain, and the patrons of the ancient order of things. The pretensions of each were plausible. The accumulation of abuses and the corruptions of religion furnished weapons to the philosophers; the dangerous tendency of the speculations of these latter, together with their impiety, which became every day more manifest, gave an advantage not less considerable to their opponents, which they did not fail to improve. In this situation the breach grew wider and wider; nothing temperate or conciliating was admitted. Every attempt at purifying religion without impairing its authority, and at improving the condition of society, without shaking its foundation, was crushed and annihilated in the encounter of two hostile forces. By this means the way was prepared, first for internal dissension, and then for wars the most bloody and extensive.

The war in which so great a part of the world was lately engaged has been frequently styled a war of principle. This was indeed its exact character; and it was this which rendered it so violent and obstinate. Disputes which are founded merely on passion or on interest, are comparatively of short duration. They are, at least, not calculated to spread. However they may inflame the principals, they are but little adapted to gain partizans.

To render them durable, there must be an infusion of speculative opinions. For, corrupt as

men are, they are yet so much the creatures of reflection, and so strongly addicted to sentiments of right and wrong, that their attachment to a public cause can rarely be secured, or their animosity be kept alive, unless their understandings are engaged by some appearances of truth and rectitude. Hence speculative differences in religion and politics become rallying points to the passions. Whoever reflects on the civil wars between the Guelphs and the Ghibbelines, or the adherents of the pope and the emperor, which distracted Italy and Germany in the middle ages; or those betwixt the houses of York and Lancaster, in the fifteenth century, will find abundant confirmation of this remark. This is well understood by the leaders of parties in all nations; who, though they frequently aim at nothing more than the attainment of power, yet always contrive to cement the attachment of their followers, by mixing some speculative opinion with their contests, well knowing that what depends for support merely on the irascible passions soon subsides. Then does party animosity reach its height, when, to an interference of interests sufficient to kindle resentment, is superadded a persuasion of rectitude, a conviction of truth, an apprehension in each party that they are contending for principles of the last importance, on the success of which the happiness of millions depends. Under these impressions men are apt to indulge the most selfish and vindictive passions without suspicion or control. The

understanding indeed, in that state, instead of controlling the passions, often serves only to give steadiness to their impulse, to ratify and consecrate, so to speak, all their movements.

When we apply these remarks to the late contest, we can be at no loss to discover the source of the unparalleled animosity which inflamed it. Never before were so many opposing interests, passions, and principles committed to such a decision. On one side an attachment to the ancient order of things, on the other a passionate desire of change; a wish in some to perpetuate, in others to destroy every thing; every abuse sacred in the eyes of the former, every foundation attempted to be demolished by the latter; a jealousy of power shrinking from the slightest innovation, pretensions to freedom pushed to madness and anarchy; superstition in all its dotage, impiety in all its fury: whatever, in short, could be found most discordant in the principles, or violent in the passions of men, were the fearful ingredients which the hand of divine justice selected to mingle in this furnace of wrath. Can we any longer wonder at the desolations it made in the earth? Great as they are, they are no more than might be expected from the peculiar nature of the warfare. When we take this into our consideration, we are no longer surprised to find that the variety of its battles burdens the memory, that the imagination is perfectly fatigued in travelling over its scenes of slaughter, and that falling, like the mystic star in the

Apocalypse, *upon the streams and the rivers, it turned the third part of their waters into blood.**

Whether the foundations of lasting tranquillity are laid, or a respite only afforded to the nations of the earth, in the present auspicious event, is a question, the discussion of which would only damp the satisfaction of this day. Whatever may be the future determinations of Providence, let no gloomy foreboding depress our gratitude for its gracious interposition in our favour. While we feel sentiments of respectful acknowledgment to the human instruments employed, let us remember they are but instruments, and that it is our duty to look through them to Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift.

Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace.

Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace will return. How can we better imitate our heavenly Father, than, when he is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence?

* The author has inserted some reflections here, which were not included in the discourse as delivered from the pulpit. He wished to explain himself somewhat more fully on certain points, on which his sentiments in a former publication have been much misunderstood or misrepresented. But this is a circumstance with which, as it has not troubled himself, he wishes not any farther to trouble the reader.

Let us hope, more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other's views and sentiments, will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. The speculations which gave occasion to them have been yielded to the arbitration of the sword, and neither the fortune of war, nor the present condition of Europe, is such as affords to any party room for high exultation. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world, is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion, therefore, all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessing we celebrate, and keep pace, as far as possible, with the movements of divine beneficence.

A most important benefit has already followed the return of peace, a reduction of the price of bread; and though other necessaries of life have not fallen in proportion, this is a circumstance which can hardly fail to follow. We trust the circumstances of the poor and the labouring classes will be much improved, and that there will shortly be no complaining in our streets. Every cottager, we hope, will feel that there is peace; commerce return to its ancient channels, the public burdens be lightened, the national debt diminished, and harmony and plenty again gladden the land.

In enumerating the motives to national gratitude, which the retrospect of the past supplies, it would be unpardonable not to reckon among the most cogent, the preservation of our excellent constitution; nor can I doubt of the concurrence of all who hear me when I add, it is a pleasing reflection, that at a period when the spirit of giddiness and revolt has been so prevalent, we have preferred the blessings of order to a phantom of liberty, and have not been so mad as to wade through the horrors of a revolution to make way for a military despot. If the constitution has sustained serious injury, either during the war, or at any preceding period, as there is great room to apprehend, we shall have leisure (may we but have virtue!) to apply temperate and effectual reforms. In the mean time, let us love it sincerely, cherish it tenderly, and secure it as far as possible on all sides, watching with impartial solicitude against every thing that may impair its spirit, or endanger its form.

But above all, let us cherish the spirit of religion. When we wish to open our hearts on this subject, and to represent to you the vanity, the nothingness of every thing else in comparison, we feel ourselves checked by an apprehension you will consider it merely as professional language, and consequently entitled to little regard. If, however, you will only turn your eyes to the awful scenes before you, our voice may be spared. They will speak loud enough of themselves. On this

subject they will furnish the most awful and momentous instruction. From them you will learn, that the safety of nations is not to be sought in arts or in arms; that science may flourish amidst the decay of humanity; that the utmost barbarity may be blended with the utmost refinement; that a passion for speculation, unrestrained by the fear of God and a deep sense of human imperfection, merely hardens the heart; and that, as religion, in short, is the great tamer of the breast, the source of tranquillity and order, so the crimes of voluptuousness and impiety inevitably conduct a people, before they are aware, to the brink of desolation and anarchy.

If you had wished to figure to yourselves a country which had reached the utmost pinnacle of prosperity, you would undoubtedly have turned your eyes to France, as she appeared a few years before the revolution; illustrious in learning and genius; the favourite abode of the arts, and the mirror of fashion, whither the flower of the nobility from all countries resorted, to acquire the last polish of which the human character is susceptible. Lulled in voluptuous repose, and dreaming of a philosophical millennium, without dependence upon God, like the generation before the flood, *they ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage.* In that exuberant soil every thing seemed to flourish, but religion and virtue. The season however was at length arrived, when God was resolved to punish their impiety, as well as to avenge

the blood of his servants, whose souls had for a century been incessantly crying to him from under the altar. And what method did he employ for this purpose? When He to whom vengeance belongs, when He whose ways are unsearchable, and whose wisdom is inexhaustible, proceeded to the execution of this strange work, he drew from his treasures a weapon he had never employed before. Resolving to make their punishment as signal as their crimes, he neither let loose an inundation of barbarous nations, nor the desolating powers of the universe: he neither overwhelmed them with earthquakes, nor visited them with pestilence. He summoned from among themselves a ferocity more terrible than either; a ferocity which, mingling in the struggle for liberty, and borrowing aid from that very refinement to which it seemed to be opposed, turned every man's hand against his neighbour, sparing no age, nor sex, nor rank, till, satiated with the ruin of greatness, the distresses of innocence, and the tears of beauty, it terminated its career in the most unrelenting despotism. *Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and which wast, and which shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.*

If the weakness of humanity will not permit us to keep pace with the movements of divine justice; if, from the deep commiseration excited by the view of so much woe, our tongue falters in

expressing those sublime sentiments of triumph which revelation suggests on this occasion, we shall be pardoned by the Being who knows our frame; while nothing can prevent us, at least, from adoring this illustrious vindication of his own religion, whose divinity we see is not less apparent in the blessings it bestows, than in the calamities which mark its departure.

Our only security against similar calamities is a steady adherence to this religion; not the religion of mere form and profession, but that which has its seat in the heart; not as it is mutilated and debased by the refinements of a false philosophy, but as it exists in all its simplicity and extent in the sacred Scriptures; consisting in sorrow for sin, in the love of God, and in faith in a crucified Redeemer. If this religion revives and flourishes amongst us, we may still surmount all our difficulties, and no weapon formed against us will prosper: if we despise or neglect it, no human power can afford us protection. Instead of shewing our love to our country, therefore, by engaging eagerly in the strife of parties, let us choose to signalize it rather by beneficence, by piety, by an exemplary discharge of the duties of private life, under a persuasion that that man, in the final issue of things, will be seen to have been the best patriot, who is the best christian. He who diffuses the most happiness, and mitigates the most distress within his own circle, is undoubtedly the best

friend to his country and the world, since nothing more is necessary, than for all men to imitate his conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment. While the passion, then, of some is to shine, of some to govern, and of others to accumulate, let one great passion alone inflame our breasts, the passion which reason ratifies, which conscience approves, which heaven inspires, that of being and of doing good.

There is no vanity, I trust, in supposing that the reflections which this Discourse has presented to your view, have awakened those sentiments of gratitude to the Father of mercies for his gracious interposition in the restoration of peace, which you are impatient to express by stronger evidence than words. Should this be the case, a plain path is before you. While the eminence of the divine perfections renders it impossible for us to contribute to the happiness, or augment the glory of the Creator, he has left amongst us, for the exercise of our virtue, the indigent and the afflicted, whom he has in an especial manner committed to our care, and appointed to represent himself. The objects of the institution, for which I have this day the honour to plead, are those of whom the very mention is sufficient to excite compassion in every feeling mind, *the sick and the aged poor.** To be scantily provided with the

* It may be proper to remind the reader that this discourse was preached for the benefit of a Benevolent Society, recently instituted at Cambridge, for the relief of the sick and aged poor;

necessaries of life, to endure cold, hunger, and nakedness, is a great calamity at all seasons; it is almost unnecessary to observe how much these evils are aggravated by the pressure of disease, when exhausted nature demands whatever the most tender assiduity can supply to cheer its languor and support its sufferings. It is the peculiar misfortune of the afflicted poor, that the very circumstance which increases their wants, cuts off, by disqualifying them for labour, the means of their supply. Bodily affliction, therefore, falls upon them with an accumulated weight. Poor, at best, when seized with sickness they become utterly destitute. Incapable even of presenting themselves to the eye of pity, nothing remains for them, but silently to yield themselves up to sorrow and despair. The second class of objects, which it is the design of this society to relieve, are, *the aged poor.* Here it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt to paint to you the sorrows of old age; a period indeed which, by a strange inconsistency, we all wish to reach, while we

and that one principal motive with the author for complying with the request of the Society in publishing it, was a desire to excite the attention of the benevolent to the formation of similar societies in other parts. For the local information of such as may be desirous of contributing to this Institution, the writer has the pleasure to add, that Mr. Alderman Ind, with that benignity which marks his character, has been so kind as to undertake the office of treasurer to the society, to whom the benevolent are requested to send their annual subscriptions or donations. A further account of the institution will be found at the end of the Sermon.

shrink with a sort of horror from the infirmities and sufferings inseparable from that melancholy season. What can be a more pitiable object than decrepitude, sinking under the accumulated load of years and of penury? Arrived at that period when the most fortunate confess they have no pleasure, how forlorn is his situation, who, destitute of the means of subsistence, has survived his last child, or his last friend. Solitary and neglected, without comfort and without hope, depending for every thing on a kindness he has no means of conciliating, he finds himself left alone in a world to which he has ceased to belong, and is only felt in society as a burden it is impatient to shake off. Such are the objects to which this institution solicits your regard.

It is, in my humble opinion, a most excellent part of the plan of the Society, in whose behalf I address you, that no relief is administered without first personally visiting the objects in their own abode. By such means the precise circumstances of each case are clearly ascertained, and imposture is sure to be detected. Where charity is administered without this precaution, as it is impossible to discriminate real from pretended distress, the most disinterested benevolence often fails of its purpose; and that is yielded to clamorous importunity, which is withheld from lonely want. The mischief extends much farther. From the frequency of such imposition, the best minds are in danger of becoming disgusted with the exercise of

pecuniary charity, till, from a mistaken persuasion that it is impossible to guard against deception, they treat the most abandoned and the most deserving with the same neglect. Thus the heart contracts into selfishness, and those delicious emotions which the benevolent Author of Nature implanted to prompt us to relieve distress, become extinct; a loss greater to ourselves than to the objects to whom we deny our compassion. To prevent a degradation of character so fatal, allow me to urge on all whom Providence has blessed with the means of doing good, on those especially who are indulged with affluence and leisure, the importance of employing some portion of their time in *inspecting*, as well as of their property in *relieving*, the distresses of the poor.

By this means an habitual tenderness will be cherished, which will heighten inexpressibly the happiness of life, at the same time that it will most effectually counteract that selfishness which a continual addictedness to the pursuits of avarice and ambition never fails to produce. As selfishness is a principle of continual operation, it needs to be opposed by some other principle, whose operation is equally uniform and steady; but the casual impulse of compassion, excited by occasional applications for relief, is by no means equal to this purpose. Then only will benevolence become a prevailing habit of mind, when its exertion enters into the *system* of life, and occupies some stated portion of the time and attention. In addition

to this, it is worth while to reflect how much consolation the poor must derive from finding they are the objects of personal attention to their more opulent neighbours; that they are acknowledged as brethren of the same family; and that, should they be overtaken with affliction or calamity, they are in no danger of perishing unpitied and unnoticed. With all the pride that wealth is apt to inspire, how seldom are the opulent truly aware of their high destination. Placed, by the Lord of all, on an eminence, and intrusted with a superior portion of his goods, to them it belongs to be the dispensers of his bounty, to succour distress, to draw merit from obscurity, to behold oppression and want vanish before them, and, accompanied wherever they move with perpetual benedictions, to present an image of Him, who, at the close of time, in the kingdom of the redeemed, will *wipe away tears from all faces.* It is surely unnecessary to remark how insipid are the pleasures of voluptuousness and ambition, compared to what such a life must afford, whether we compare them with respect to the present, the review of the past, or the prospect of the future.

It is probable some may object that such exertions, however amiable in themselves, are rendered unnecessary by the system of parochial relief established in this country. To which it is obvious to reply, that however useful this institution may be, there must always be a great deal of distress, which it can never relieve. Like all national

institutions, it is incapable of bending from the rigour of general rules, so as to adapt itself to the precise circumstances of each respective case. Besides that it would be vain to expect much tenderness in the execution of a legal office, the machine itself, though it may be well suited to the general purpose it is intended to answer, is too large and unwieldy to touch those minute points of difference, those distinct kinds and gradations of distress, to which the operation of personal benevolence will easily adapt itself. In addition to which it will occur to those who reflect, that on account of the increasing demands of the poor, the parochial system, which presses hard upon many ill able to bear it, is already strained to the utmost.

Although the Society in whose behalf I address you is but recently established, it has been enabled painfully to ascertain the vast proportion of its objects of the female sex,—a melancholy circumstance, deserving the serious attention of the public on more accounts than one. Of the cases which have occurred to their notice, since the commencement of their labours, more than three-fourths have been of that description. The situation of females without fortune in this country is indeed deeply affecting. Excluded from all the active employments in which they might engage with the utmost propriety, by men, who to the injury of one sex, add the disgrace of making the other effeminate and ridiculous, an indigent female, the

object probably of love and tenderness in her youth, at a more advanced age a withered flower! has nothing to do but to retire and die. Thus it comes to pass, that the most amiable part of our species, by a detestable combination in those who ought to be their protectors, are pushed off the stage, as though they were no longer worthy to live, when they ceased to be the objects of passion. How strongly on this account this society is entitled to your attention (as words would fail) I leave to the pensive reflection of your own bosoms.

To descant on the evils of poverty might seem entirely unnecessary, (for what with most is the great business of life, but to remove it to the greatest possible distance?) were it not, that besides its being the most common of all evils, there are circumstances peculiar to itself, which expose it to neglect. The seat of its sufferings are the appetites, not the passions; appetites which are common to all, and which, being capable of no peculiar combinations, confer no distinction. There are kinds of distress founded on the passions, which, if not applauded, are at least admired in their excess, as implying a peculiar refinement of sensibility in the mind of the sufferer. Embellished by taste, and wrought by the magic of genius into innumerable forms, they turn grief into a luxury, and draw from the eyes of millions delicious tears. But no muse ever ventured to adorn the distresses of poverty or the sorrows of hunger. Disgusting taste and delicacy, and presenting

nothing pleasing to the imagination, they are mere misery in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence, shame in the sufferer, contempt in the beholder, and an obscurity of station, which frequently removes them from the view, are their inseparable portion. Nor can I reckon it on this account amongst the improvements of the present age, that, by the multiplication of works of fiction, the attention is diverted from scenes of real to those of imaginary distress; from the distress which demands relief, to that which admits of embellishment: in consequence of which the understanding is enervated, the heart is corrupted, and those feelings which were designed to stimulate to active benevolence are employed in nourishing a sickly sensibility. To a most impure and whimsical writer,* whose very humanity is unnatural, we are considerably indebted for this innovation. Though it cannot be denied, that by diffusing a warmer colouring over the visions of fancy, sensibility is often a source of exquisite pleasures to others, if not to the possessor, yet it should never be confounded with benevolence; since it constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine, than the virtue of a good, mind. A good man may have nothing of it, a bad man may have it in abundance.

* The author alludes to Sterne, the whole tendency of whose writings is to degrade human nature, by resolving all our passions into a mere animal instinct, and that of the grossest sort. It was perfectly natural for such a writer to employ his powers in panegyrising an ass.

Leaving therefore these amusements of the imagination to the vain and indolent, let us awake to nature and truth; and in a world from which we must so shortly be summoned, a world abounding with so many real scenes of heart-rending distress as well as of vice and impiety, employ all our powers in relieving the one and in correcting the other; that when we have arrived at the borders of eternity, we may not be tormented with the awful reflection of having lived in vain.

If ever there was a period when poverty made a more forcible appeal than usual to the heart, it is unquestionably that which we have lately witnessed; the calamities of which, though greatly diminished by the auspicious event which we now celebrate, are far from being entirely removed. Poverty used in happier times to be discerned in a superior meanness of apparel and the total absence of ornament. We have seen its ravages reach the *man*, proclaiming themselves in the trembling step, in the dejected countenance, and the faded form. We have seen emaciated infants, no ruddiness in their cheeks, no sprightliness in their motions, while the eager and imploring looks of their mothers, reduced below the loud expressions of grief, have announced unutterable anguish and silent despair.

From the reflections which have been made on the peculiar nature of poverty, you will easily account for the prodigious stress which is laid on the duty of pecuniary benevolence in the Old and

New Testaments. In the former, God delighted in assuming the character of the patron of the poor and needy; in the latter, the short definition of the religion which he approves, *is to visit the fatherless and widow, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* He who knew what was in man, well knew that, since the entrance of sin, selfishness was become the epidemic disease of human nature; a malady which almost every thing tends to inflame, and the conquest of which is absolutely necessary, before we can be prepared for the felicity of heaven; that whatever leads us out of ourselves, whatever unites us to him and his creatures in pure love, is an important step towards the recovery of his image; and finally, that his church would consist for the most part of *the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom,* whom he was resolved to shield from the contempt of all who respect his authority, by selecting them from the innumerable millions of mankind to be the peculiar representatives of himself.

Happy are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions; who, looking beyond the transitory distinctions which prevail here, and will vanish at the first approach of eternity, honour God in his children, and Christ in his image. How much, on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of their Lord. *When he shall come and shall not keep silence, when*

a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him, every thing, it is true, will combine to fill them with consternation; yet, methinks, neither the voice of the archangel, nor the trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible to these men as the sight of the poor members of Christ; whom, having spurned and neglected in the days of their humiliation, they will then behold with amazement united to their Lord, covered with his glory, and seated on his throne. How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty! How will they cast down their eyes in their presence! How will they curse that gold, which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness, which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the only wisdom: you will then be convinced it is better to be endeared to the cottage, than admired in the palace; when to have wiped away the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favour of princes.

ACCOUNT OF

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,

FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE SICK AND AGED POOR,

INSTITUTED AT CAMBRIDGE, 1801.

Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor. Psalm xli. 1.
Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Matt. xxv. 40.

THAT benevolence is an habitual duty, arising out of our constitution as rational and social creatures, and enforced upon us by the most powerful motives as Christians, no one will deny. The various exertions of the humane and the pious, in private circles and in public institutions, are so many proofs of the truth of this sentiment; but notwithstanding those exertions, there is still ample room for enlargement. Those persons who are in the habit of visiting the cottages or the chambers of the poor, are too frequently the melancholy witnesses of that extreme poverty, pining sickness, and poignant distress, which energetically call for relief.

With the design of administering, in some degree, such relief, a number of persons have formed themselves into a Society, the nature and objects of which are such, that it may, with the greatest truth, be said to *deserve*, and it can scarcely be doubted but it will *meet* with such encouragement as may render it a blessing to the poor of the town of CAMBRIDGE. It is likewise ardently hoped, that the Society will meet with such farther encouragement, that its benevolent exertions may not be confined to the town, but extended to the neighbouring villages.

The FIRST object of the Society is to afford PECUNIARY ASSISTANCE to the SICK and the AGED POOR. To select proper objects, and guard against the abuses attending indiscriminate relief, visitors will be appointed to examine and judge of the nature of every case, and to report the same to a Committee of the Society.

The SECOND object of the Society is—The MORAL and RELIGIOUS improvement of the objects relieved. *A word spoken in due season*, (says the wise man,) *how good is it!* The hour of affliction, the bed of sickness, afford the most seasonable opportunities for usefulness; and it is hoped, that the heart may in a more peculiar manner be open to the best of impressions at such a season, and when under a sense of obligation for relief already administered.

In a Society like the present, all distinctions of sects and parties are lost in the one general design of DOING GOOD; and the success which has attended societies, nearly similar, in different parts of this kingdom, and more particularly in the metropolis, in relieving the distress and ameliorating the condition of thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures, affords reason to hope, that under the divine blessing, similar success will attend the Society established in this town.

RULES.

I. Any person of whatever denomination, age, or sex, disposed to assist this benevolent undertaking, may be admitted a Subscriber; each Subscriber, on admission, to pay *not less* than one shilling, and from two-pence per week to any sum such Subscriber may think proper.

II. That the business of the Society be managed by a Committee of fourteen persons, including the Treasurer and Secretary; five of whom shall be competent to transact business:—that the Committee be open to any member of the Society, who may think proper to attend. In case of any vacancy in the Committee, by death, or resignation, the remaining members of the Committee be empowered to fill up such vacancy.

III. That the Committee meet monthly, at each others' houses, to receive reports, consider of cases, appoint visitors, and audit their accounts.

IV. That there be an annual general meeting, of which due notice will be given, when the state of the Society shall be reported, and the Treasurer, Secretary, and Committee appointed, to manage the concerns thereof.

V. That the SICK and the AGED be esteemed the *only* objects of the compassion of this Society; and when the fund is reduced to the sum of five pounds, the cases of the sick alone shall be attended to.

VI. That no member be allowed to recommend a case, until three months after his or her subscription has commenced, nor, if four months in arrears, until such arrears be discharged, provided he or she has received notice of the same.

VII. That no case be received but from a Subscriber, who is expected to be well acquainted with the case recommended, and to report the particulars to one of the visitors.

VIII. That the Visitors be appointed to administer relief, and not the person who recommends the case.

IX. That no Subscribers, while they continue such, shall receive any relief from this Society, nor shall any of those who conduct the business thereof, receive any gratuity for their services.

The Committee consists of an equal number of Ladies and Gentlemen; and persons of both sexes are appointed as visitors in rotation.

Subscriptions and Donations are received by the Treasurer, Secretary, or any Member of the Committee.

At a General Meeting of the Society, held, agreeably to public notice, at Mr. Alderman IND's, on Monday, May 3, 1802:—It was resolved, That when the Annual Subscriptions of the Society amount to *Sixty* Pounds, and the Fund to *Thirty* Pounds, the Committee be empowered to extend relief to other distressed objects besides the SICK and the AGED.

THE SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE PRESENT CRISIS:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

BRIDGE STREET, BRISTOL,

OCTOBER 19, 1803;

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Uter esset, non uter imperaret. *Cicero.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME apology is due to the public for this discourse appearing so long after it was preached. The fact is, the writer was engaged on an exchange of services for a month with his highly esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Lowell, of Bristol, author of an excellent volume of Sermons on Practical Subjects, at the time it was delivered, and had no opportunity of writing it till he returned. As it touches entirely on permanent topics, except what relates to the threatened invasion, still impending over us, he knows not but it may be as suitable now as if it had appeared earlier. As it is, he commits it to the candour of the public. He has only to add, that the allusion to the effects of the tragic muse* should have been marked as a quotation, though the author knows not with certainty to whom to ascribe it. He believes it fell from the elegant pen of an illustrious female, Mrs. More.

* Page 182.

SHELFORD,
Nov. 30, 1803.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In this edition, the author has corrected those errors of the press, which in the former were very considerable. The Monthly Reviewers have founded a criticism entirely on one of them. The author had remarked, that infidelity was bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted christianity. The printer having omitted the word *corrupted*, the reviewers remark that they never found in their map of christianity any stagnant marshes. Having mentioned the Monthly Reviewers, he must be permitted to notice a most singular error into which they have been betrayed; that of supposing the author had confounded Aristotle with Mrs. More. It is well known to every one who has the smallest tincture of learning, that the great critic of antiquity represents the design of tragedy to be that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. It appeared to the author that infidelity, by the crimes and disorders it has produced in society, was not incapable of answering a similar purpose. He accordingly availed himself of the comparison; but it having occurred to him afterwards that he had read a similar passage in Mrs. More, he thought it right to notice this circumstance in an

advertisement; in which he says, he apprehends the *allusion* to the tragic muse to belong to Mrs. More. It was not the opinion of its being the purpose of tragedy to purify the heart by pity and terror, that he ascribed to that celebrated female; but *solely the allusion* to that opinion as illustrating the effect of infidelity. It is on this slender foundation, however, that the writer in the Monthly Review, with what design is best known to himself, has thought fit to represent him as ascribing to Mrs. More, as its author, a critical opinion which has been current for more than two thousand years. He is certain his words will not support any such construction, though he will not contend that he has expressed himself with all the clearness that might be wished.

He is sorry to find some passages towards the close of the sermon have given offence to persons whom he highly esteems. It has been objected, that the author has admitted to heaven a crowd of legislators, patriots, and heroes, whose title to that honour, on christian principles, is very equivocal. In reply to which, he begs it to be remembered that the New Testament teaches, that *God is no respecter of persons; that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him;* that we may be certain there will not be wanting in the innumerable assembly around the throne, some of the highest rank, and of the most illustrious talents; and that the writer has qualified the character of those legislators and patriots,

whom he has represented as being in heaven, with the epithet of *virtuous;* and this, after he had been at some *pains to explain what he comprehended in his idea of virtue.* He has been censured for attempting to animate the defenders of their country, by holding out the prospect of immortality, should they fall in the contest; and it has been asked why, instead of amusing them with this phantom, not endeavour to convince them of the necessity of religious preparation for death, when he must be aware it is very possible for men to die fighting in defence of their country, and yet fall short of future happiness. The writer is, indeed, fully persuaded, that in the concerns of salvation, no reliance ought to be placed on a detached instance of virtuous conduct; that a solid piety is indispensably necessary, and that *without holiness no man can see the Lord.* But, after having employed great part of the preceding discourse in urging the necessity of repentance, he may surely be allowed for a moment to take it for granted that his admonitions have been attended to; and, without treading over the same ground, in an address to men who are supposed to be just entering the field, to advert to topics more immediately connected with military prowess. It was never his intention to place worldly on a level with religious considerations, or to confound the sentiments of honour with the dictates of duty. But, as the fear of death, and the love of fame, are both natural, and both innocent within certain limits, he was not aware

there could be any impropriety, when he had already dwelt largely on religious topics, to oppose one natural sentiment to another. He who confines himself to such considerations, violates the character of the christian minister; he who neglects them entirely, is wanting to the duties of the present crisis. The writer has only to add on this head, that, in the addresses on similar occasions in the Scriptures, there is rarely a greater mixture of religious topics, or more reserve in appealing to other motives, than is found here; so that, if he has erred, his error is countenanced by the highest, that is, by inspired, authority.

Finally: he has been censured for expressing, in such strong terms, his detestation of the character of Buonaparte. It has been said, that however just his representation may be, it is losing sight of the true design of a national fast, which is to confess and bewail our own sins, instead of inveighing against the sins of others. That this is the true end of a public fast, the writer is convinced; on which account he has expressly cautioned his readers against placing reliance on their supposed superiority in virtue to their enemies. What he has said of the character of Buonaparte is with an entirely different view; it is urged, not as a ground of security, but as a motive to the most vigorous resistance. In this view, it is impossible for it to be too deeply impressed. When a people are threatened with invasion, will it be affirmed that the personal character of the invader

is of no consequence; and that it is not worth a moment's consideration whether he possess the virtuous moderation of a Washington, or the restless and insatiable ambition of a Buonaparte? Though hostile invasion is an unspeakable calamity in any situation, and under any circumstances, yet it is capable of as many modifications as the dispositions and designs of the invaders; and if in the present instance the crimes of our enemy supply the most cogent motives to resistance, can it be wrong to turn his vices against himself; and, by imprinting a deep abhorrence of his perfidy and cruelty on the hearts of the people, to put them more thoroughly on their guard against their effects?

It may be thought a sermon on a fast-day should have comprehended a fuller enumeration of our national sins, and this was the author's design when he first turned his attention to the subject: but he was diverted from it by observing that these themes, from the press at least, seem to make no kind of impression; and that whatever the most skilful preacher can advance, is fastidiously repelled as stale and professional declamation. The people in general are settled into an indifference so profound, with respect to all such subjects, that the preacher who arraigns their vices in the most vehement manner, has no reason to be afraid of exciting their displeasure; but it is well, if, long before he has finished his reproofs, he has not lulled them to sleep. From a due

consideration of the temper of the times, he therefore thought it expedient to direct the attention to what appeared to him the chief source of public degeneracy, rather than insist at large on particular vices. He has in this edition, in some places, expanded the illustration where it appeared defective, as well as corrected the gross errors of the press which disfigured the discourse; being desirous, ere it descends to that oblivion which is the natural exit of such publications, of presenting it for once in an amended form, that it may at least be decently interred.

A SERMON.

JERÉMIAH viii. 6.

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

THOUGH we are well assured the Divine Being is attentive to the conduct of men at all times, yet it is but reasonable to believe he is peculiarly so whilst they are under his correcting hand. As *he does not willingly afflict the children of men,* he is wont to do it slowly, and at intervals, waiting, if we may so speak, to see whether the preceding chastisement will produce the sentiments which shall appease his anger, or those which shall confirm his resolution to punish. When sincere humiliation and sorrow for past offences take place, his displeasure subsides, he relents and *repents himself of the evil.* Thus he speaks by the mouth of Jeremiah. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their*

evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

We are this day assembled at the call of our Sovereign, to humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, under a sense of our sins, and to implore his interposition, that we may not be delivered into the hands of our enemies, nor fall a prey to the malice of those who hate us. It is surely, then, of the utmost consequence to see to it, that our humiliation be deep, our repentance sincere, and the dispositions we cherish, as well as the resolutions we form, suitable to the nature of the crisis, and the solemnity of the occasion; such, in a word, as Omniscience will approve.

In the words of the text, the Lord reproaches the people of Israel with not speaking aright, and complains that, while he was waiting to hear the language of penitential sorrow and humiliation, he witnessed nothing but an insensibility to his reproofs, an obstinate perseverance in guilt, with a fatal eagerness to rush to their former courses. *He hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented himself of his iniquity, nor said, What have I done? But every one rushed to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

As the principles of the divine administration are invariable, and the situation of Great Britain, at this moment, not altogether unlike that of Israel at the time this portion of prophecy was penned, perhaps we cannot better improve the present solemnity, than by taking occasion, from the words

before us, to point out some of those sentiments and views which appear in the present crisis not to be *right;* and, after exploding these, to endeavour to substitute more correct ones in their stead.

1. They who content themselves with tracing national judgments to their natural causes, without looking higher, entertain a view of the subject very inadequate to the demands of the present season. When you have imputed to the effects of an unparalleled convulsion on the continent, to the relative situation of foreign powers, to the turbulent passions and insatiable ambition of an individual, the evils which threaten us, what have you done to mitigate those evils? What alleviation have you afforded to perplexity and distress? They still exist in all their force. Far be it from me to attempt to discourage political inquiry. An inquiry into the sources of great events, an attempt to develope the more hidden causes which influence, under God, the destiny of nations, is an exercise of the mental powers more noble than almost any other, inasmuch as it embraces the widest field, and grasps a chain whose links are the most numerous, complicated, and subtile. The most profound political speculations, however, the most refined theories of government, though they establish the fame of their authors, will be found, perhaps, to have had very little influence on the happiness of nations. As the art of criticism never made an orator or a poet, though it enables us to judge of their merits, so the comprehensive

speculation of modern times, which has reviewed and compared the manners and institutions of every age and country, has never formed a wise government or a happy people. It arrives too late for that purpose, since it owes its existence to an extensive survey of mankind, under a vast variety of forms, through all those periods of national improvement and decay, in which the happiest efforts of wisdom and policy have been already made. The welfare of a nation depends much less on the refined wisdom of the few, than on the manners and character of the many: and as moral and religious principles have the chief influence in forming that character, so an acknowledgment of the hand of God, a deep sense of his dominion, is amongst the first of those principles. While we attend to the operation of second causes, let us never forget that there is a Being placed above them, who can move and arrange them at pleasure, and in whose hands they never fail to accomplish the purposes of his unerring counsel. The honour of the Supreme Ruler requires that his supremacy should be acknowledged, his agency confessed; nor is there any thing which he more intends by his chastisements than to extort this confession, or any thing he more highly resents than an attempt to exclude him from the concerns of his own world. *Woe unto them* (saith Isaiah) *that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the*

*tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.** The same prophet complains, that while the hand of Jehovah was lifted up they would not see; but he adds, *they shall see.* If lighter chastisements will not suffice, he has heavier in reserve; if they despise his reproofs, he will *render his anger with fury, his rebukes with flames of fire.* He is resolved to overcome; and what must be the issue of a contest with Omnipotence, it is as easy to foresee as it is painful to contemplate.

2. They *speak not aright,* who, instead of placing their reliance on God for safety, repose only on an arm of flesh.—The perfect unanimity which prevails, the ardour to defend every thing dear to us, which is expressed by all classes; the sacrifices cheerfully made, the labours sustained, and the mighty preparations by sea and land, which the vigilance of government has set on foot to repel the enemy from our coasts, or insure his discomfiture should he arrive, must be highly satisfactory to every well-disposed mind. They afford, as far as human means can afford, a well-founded prospect of success. Though there is, on this account, no room to despond, but much, on the contrary, to lead us to anticipate a favourable issue to the contest; yet nothing, surely, can justify that language of extravagant boast, that proud confidence in our national force, without a depen-

* Isaiah v. 11, 12.

dence upon God, which, however fashionable it may be, is as remote from the dictates of true courage as of true piety. True courage is firm and unassuming: true piety, serious and humble. In the midst of all our preparations, we shall, if we are wise, repose our chief confidence in Him who has every element at his disposal; who can easily disconcert the wisest councils, confound the mightiest projects, and save, when he pleases, by many or by few. While the vanity of such a pretended reliance on Providence as supersedes the use of means is readily confessed, it is to be feared we are not sufficiently careful to guard against a contrary extreme, in its ultimate effects not less dangerous. If to depend on the interposition of Providence without human exertion, be to tempt God; to confide in an arm of flesh, without seeking his aid, is to deny him; the former is to be pitied for its weakness, the latter to be censured for its impiety; nor is it easy to say which affords the worst omen of success. Let us avoid both these extremes; availing ourselves of all the resources which wisdom can suggest, or energy produce, let us still feel and acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God. With humble and contrite hearts, with filial confidence and affection, let us flee to his arms, that thus we may enjoy the united supports of reason and religion; and every principle, human and divine, may concur to assure us of our safety. Thus shall we effectually shun the denunciations so frequent and so

terrible, contained in his holy word, against the vanity of human confidences. *Cursed is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*

3. Their conduct is not to be approved, who, in the present crisis, indulge in *wanton* and *indiscriminate* censure of the measures of our rulers. I say *wanton* and *indiscriminate,* because the privilege of censuring, with moderation and decency, the measures of government, is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can never lose its value in the eyes of the public, till it is licentiously abused. The temperate exercise of this privilege is a most useful restraint on those errors and excesses, to which the possession of power supplies a temptation. The free expression of the public voice is capable of overawing those who have nothing beside to apprehend; and the tribunal of public opinion is one whose decisions it is not easy for men in the most elevated stations to despise. To this we may add, that the unrestrained discussion of national affairs not only *gives weight* to the sentiments, but is eminently adapted to *enlighten the minds,* of a people; and, consequently, to increase that general fund of talent and information, from which the accomplishments, even of statesmen themselves, must be ultimately derived. While, therefore, we maintain this privilege with jealous care, let us be equally careful not to abuse it. There is a respect, in my apprehension, due to civil governors *on account of their office,* which we are not permitted to violate, even when we are

under the necessity of blaming their measures. When the apostle Paul was betrayed into an intemperate expression of anger against the Jewish High Priest, from an ignorance of the station he occupied, he was no sooner informed of this, than he apologized, and quoted a precept of the Mosaic law, which says, *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* In agreement with which, the New Testament subjoins to the duty of fearing God, that of honouring the king; and frequently and emphatically inculcates submission to civil rulers, not so much from a fear of their power, as from a respect for their office.

The ancient prophets, it is true, in the immediate discharge of their functions, appear to have treated kings and princes with no sort of ceremony. But, before we establish their style into a precedent, let us recollect they were privileged persons, speaking expressly in the name of the Most High, who gave them his words, and invested them, for the moment, with a portion of his majesty.

Apart from the personal characters of rulers, which are fluctuating and variable, you will find the apostles continually enjoin respect to government, *as government,* as a permanent ordinance of God, susceptible of various modifications from human wisdom, but essential, under some form or other, to the existence of society; and affording a representation, faint and inadequate, it is true, but still a representation, of the dominion of God over the earth. The wisdom of resting the duty of

submission on this ground is obvious. The possession of office forms a plain and palpable distinction, liable to no ambiguity or dispute. Personal merits, on the contrary, are easily contested, so that if the obligation of obedience were founded on these, it would have no kind of force, nor retain any sort of hold on the conscience; the bonds of social order might be dissolved by an epigram or a song. The more liberal sentiments of respect for institutions being destroyed, nothing would remain to insure tranquillity, but a servile fear of men. In the absence of those sentiments, as the mildest exertion of authority would be felt as an injury, authority would soon cease to be mild; and princes would have no alternative but that of governing their subjects with the severe jealousy of a master over slaves impatient of revolt: so narrow is the boundary which separates a licentious freedom from a ferocious tyranny! How incomparably more noble, salutary, and just, are the maxims the apostles lay down on this subject. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever resisteth, therefore, the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for*

wrath, but also for conscience sake. We shall do well to guard against any system which would withdraw the duties we owe to our rulers and to society from the jurisdiction of conscience; that principle of the mind, whose prerogative it is to prescribe to every other, and to pronounce that definitive sentence from which there is no appeal. A good man is accustomed to acquiesce in the idea of his duties as an ultimate object, without inquiring at every step why he should perform them, or amusing himself with imagining cases and situations in which they would be liable to limitations and exceptions. Instead of being curious after these, (for I do not deny that such exceptions exist,) let the great general duty of submission to civil authority be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of the mind, and made a part of our elementary morality.

At this season especially, when unanimity is so requisite, every endeavour to excite discontent, by reviling the character, or depreciating the talents, of those who are intrusted with the administration, is highly criminal. Without suspicion of flattery, we may be permitted to add, that their zeal in the service of their country cannot be questioned; that the vast preparations they have made for our defence claim our gratitude; and that if, in a situation so arduous, and in the management of affairs so complicated and difficult, they have committed mistakes, they are amply entitled to a candid construction of their measures.

Having been detained by these reflections somewhat longer than was intended, it is high time to return to those religious considerations which are more immediately appropriate to the present season. I therefore proceed to add,

4. That they appear to entertain mistaken sentiments, who rely with too much confidence for success on our supposed superiority in virtue to our enemies. Such a confidence betrays inattention to the actual conduct of Providence. Wherever there is conscious guilt, there is room to apprehend punishment; nor is it for the criminal to decide where the merited punishment shall first fall. The cup of divine displeasure is, indeed, presented successively to guilty nations, but it by no means invariably begins with those who have run the greatest career in guilt. On the contrary, *judgment* often *begins at the house of God;* and he frequently chastises his servants with severity before he proceeds to the destruction of his enemies. He assured Abraham, his seed should be afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years, and that after their expiration, *the nation that afflicted them he would judge.* The Assyrian monarchs, blind and impious idolaters, were permitted for a long period to oppress his chosen people; after which, to use his own words, *he punished the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Babylon;* and having accomplished his design in their correction, cast the rod into the fire. His conduct, on such occasions, resembles

that of a parent, who, full of solicitude for the welfare of his children, animadverts upon faults in *them*, which he suffers to pass without notice in persons for whom he is less interested. Let us adore both the goodness and severity of God. The punishments which are designed to amend, are inflicted with comparative vigilance and speed; those which are meant to destroy, are usually long suspended, while the devoted victims pass on with seeming impunity.

But, independent of this consideration, that superiority in virtue which is claimed, may be neither so great, nor so certain, as we are ready at first to suppose. To decide on the comparative guilt of two individuals, much more of two nations, demands a more comprehensive knowledge of circumstances than we are usually able to obtain. To settle a question of this sort, it is not enough barely to inspect the manners of each; for the quality of actions, considered in themselves, is one thing; and the comparative guilt of the persons to whom they belong, is another. Before we can determine such a question, it is necessary to weigh and estimate the complicated influences to which they are exposed, the tendency of all their institutions, their respective degrees of information, and the comparative advantages and disadvantages under which they are placed. And who is equal to such a survey, but the Supreme Judge, to whom it belongs to decide on the character both of nations and individuals?

Our enemies, it is true, in the moments of anarchy and madness, treated the religion of Jesus with an ostentation of insult; but it was not till that religion had been disguised, and almost concealed from their view under a veil of falsehoods and impostures. The religion they rejected, debased by foreign infusions, mingled with absurd tenets, trifling superstitions, and cruel maxims, retained scarce any traces of the *truth as it is in Jesus*. The best of men were compelled to flee their country to avoid its persecuting fury, while the *souls under the altar* were employed day and night in accusing it before God. Religious inquiry was suppressed, the perusal of the word of God discountenanced, or rather prohibited, and that book, to loose whose seals the Lamb condescended to be slain, impiously closed by those who styled themselves its ministers. In this situation, it is less surprising if the body of the people,* misled by pretended philosophers, lost sight of the feeble glimmerings of light which shone in the midst of so much obscurity. How far these considerations may extenuate, before the searcher of hearts, the guilt of our enemies, it remains with him to determine. It is certain, our guilt is accompanied with no such extenuation. With us the darkness has

* The author begs this remark may be understood to apply to the French people only, and not by any means to their infidel leaders. Of the infidelity of the latter there needs no other solution to be given than the scripture one: *They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

long been past, and the true light has arisen upon us. We have long possessed the clearest display of divine truth, together with the fullest liberty of conscience. The mysteries of the gospel have been unveiled, and its sanctifying truths pressed on the conscience by those *who, having received such a ministry,* knew it to be their duty *to use great plainness of speech.*

The language of invective, it is acknowledged, should be as carefully avoided in dispensing the word of God as that of adulation; but may we not, without reprehension, ask whether it is not a melancholy truth, that many of us have continued in the midst of all this light, unchanged and impenitent; that if our enemies, with frantic impiety, renounced the forms of religion, we remain destitute of the power; and that, if they abandoned the christian name, the name is nearly the whole of christianity to which we can pretend? Still we are ready perhaps to exclaim, with the people of Israel in the context, *We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us!* Let us hear the prophet's reply. *Surely in vain hath he made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.* That law is most emphatically in vain, which is the subject of boast without being obeyed. That dispensation of religion, however perfect, is in vain, which cherishes the pride, without reforming the manners of a people. Were we, indeed, a religious people, were the traces of christianity as visible in our lives as they are in our creeds and confessions,

we might derive solid support from the comparison of ourselves with others; but if the contrary be the fact, and *there are with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God,* it will be our wisdom to relinquish this plea; and instead of boasting our superior virtue, to lie low in humiliation and repentance.

5. General lamentations and acknowledgments of the corruptions of the age, be they ever so well founded, fall very short of the real duties of this season.—It is not difficult, however painful to a good mind, to descant on the luxury, the venality, the impiety of the age, the irreligion of the rich, the immorality of the poor, and the general forgetfulness of God which pervades all classes. Such topics it would be utterly improper to exclude: but to dwell on these alone, answers very little purpose. The sentiments they excite are too vague and indistinct to make a lasting impression. To invest ourselves with an imaginary character to represent the nation to which we belong, and combining into one group the vices of the times, to utter loud lamentations, or violent invectives, is an easy task.

But this, whatever it be, is not repentance. After bewailing in this manner the sins of others, it is possible to continue quite unconcerned about our own. He who has been thus employed, may have been merely acting a part; uttering confessions in which he never meant to take a personal share. He would be mortally offended, perhaps,

to have it suspected that he himself had been guilty of any one of the sins he has been deploring, or that he had contributed in the smallest degree to draw down the judgments he so solemnly deprecates. All has been transacted under a feigned character. Instead of *repenting himself of his iniquity, or saying, What have I done?* he secretly prides himself on his exemption from the general stain; and all the advantage he derives from his humiliations and confessions, is to become more deeply enamoured of the perfections of what he supposes his real character. To such I would say, you are under a dangerous delusion; and the manner in which you perform the duties of this season completes that delusion. Your repentance, your feigned, your theatrical repentance, tends to fix you in impenitence, and your humiliation to make you proud. Whatever opinion you may entertain of the character of others, your chief concern is at home. When you have broken off your own sins by righteousness, you may, with a more perfect propriety, deplore the sins of the nation; you may intercede for it in your prayers, and, within the limits of your sphere, edify it by your example; but till you have taken this first, this necessary step, you have done nothing; and should the whole nation follow your example, and copy the spirit of your devotion, we should, after all, remain an impenitent, and finally a ruined people.

Allow me here, though it may be a digression, to endeavour the correction of a mistake, which

appears to me to have greatly perplexed, as well as abridged, the duties of similar seasons to the present. The mistake to which I allude respects the true idea of *national sins*. Many seem to take it for granted, that nothing can justly be deemed a *national sin*, but what has the sanction of the legislature, or is committed under public authority. When they hear, therefore, of national sins, they instantly revolve in their minds something which they apprehend to be criminal in the conduct of public affairs. That iniquity when established by law is more conspicuous, that it tends to a more general corruption, and by poisoning the streams of justice at their source, produces more extensive mischief than under any other circumstances, it is impossible to deny. In a country, moreover, where the people have a voice in the government, the corruption of their laws must first have inhered, and become inveterate in their manners.

Such corruption is therefore not so much an *instance* as a *monument* of national degeneracy; but it by no means follows that this is the only just idea of national sins. National sins are the sins of the nation. The system which teaches us to consider a people as acting merely through the medium of its prince or legislature, however useful or necessary to adjust the intercourse of nations with each other, is too technical, too artificial, too much of a compromise with the imperfection essential to human affairs, to enter into the views, or regulate the conduct, of the Supreme Being.

He sees things as they are; and as the greater part of the crimes committed in every country are perpetrated by its inhabitants in their individual character, it is these, though not to the exclusion of others, which chiefly provoke the divine judgments.

To consider national sins as merely comprehending the vices of rulers, or the iniquities tolerated by law, is to place the duties of such a season as this in a very *invidious* and a very *inadequate* light. It is to render them invidious: for upon this principle our chief business on such occasions is, to single out for attack those whom we are commanded to obey, to descant on public abuses, and to hold up to detestation and abhorrence the supposed delinquencies of the government under which we are placed. How far such a conduct tends to promote that broken and contrite heart which is heaven's best sacrifice, it requires no great sagacity to discover.

It is, moreover, to exhibit a most *inadequate* view of the duties of this season. It confines humiliation and confession to a mere scantling of the sins which pollute a nation. Under the worst governments (to say nothing of our own) the chief perversions of right are not found in courts of justice, nor the chief outrages on virtue in the laws, nor the greatest number of atrocities in the public administration. Civil government, the great antidote which the wisdom of man has applied to the crimes and disorders that spring up in society,

can scarcely ever become, in no free country at least is it possible for it to become, *itself* the chief crime and disorder. It may, on occasion, prescribe *particular things* that are wrong, and sometimes reward where it ought to punish; but unless it bent its force, for the most part, to the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice; unless the general spirit of its laws were in unison with the dictates of conscience, it would soon fall to pieces from intestine weakness and disorder.

A last appeal, in all moral questions, lies to the Scriptures, where you will invariably find the prophets, in their boldest paintings of national vice, in their severest denunciations of divine anger, are so far from confining their representation to the conduct of rulers, that they are seldom mentioned in comparison of the people. Their attention is chiefly occupied in depicting the corruptions which prevailed in the several classes of the community, among which the crimes of princes and judges are most severely reprehended, not as representatives, but as parts of the whole. They knew nothing of that refinement by which a people are at liberty to transfer their vices to their rulers. To confirm this remark, by adducing all the instances the prophecies afford, would be to quote a great part of the Old Testament: it is sufficient to refer you to the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, where, after portraying the manners of the age with the peculiar vehemence of style

which distinguished that holy prophet, he closes his description with these remarkable words: *And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.*

Let us not deceive ourselves with vain words. The just displeasure of God, as it will by no means spare the great, when they are criminal and impenitent, so neither is it excited by their wickedness alone. It is a fire, supplied from innumerable sources, to which every crime contributes its quota; and which every portion of guilt, wherever it is found, causes to burn with augmented violence.

Having thus endeavoured to expose those grounds of confidence which appear replete with danger, it will not be necessary to dwell long on the remaining part of the subject. To be aware of the several wrong paths into which we are liable to be misled, is the principal requisite to the finding out that which is alone the true and right one.

The first duty to which our situation summons us, is a devout acknowledgment of the hand of God. To this, whatever be the instruments employed, religion instructs us ultimately to refer national calamities as well as national blessings. *That the Lord reigns,* is one of those truths which lie at the very basis of piety; nor is there any more consoling. It fills the heart, under a right

impression of it, with a cheerful hope, and unruffled tranquillity, amidst the changes and trials of life, which we shall look for in vain from any other quarter. It is this chiefly which formed and distinguished the character of those who are emphatically said to have *walked with God.* Important as this disposition is, under all circumstances, it is what more especially suits the present crisis, and which the events we have witnessed are so eminently calculated to impress. The Psalmist accounts for the wicked's refusing to seek after God, from their having no changes; and certainly an uninterrupted series of prosperity is not favourable to piety. But if *we* forget God, we cannot plead even this slight extenuation; for the times that are *passing over us,* in the solemn phrase of Scripture, are eventful beyond all former example or conception. The fearful catastrophes, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden revolutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected, and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange a rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perfectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself; and whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised. In short, every thing around us, in the course of a few years, is so changed, that, did not the stability of the material, form a contrast to the fluctuations of the moral

and political, world, we might be tempted to suppose we had been removed to another state, or that all those things that have happened were but the illusions of fancy, and the visions of the night. How consoling, at such a season, to look up to that Being, *who is a very present help in trouble, the dwelling-place of all generations;* who changes all things, and is himself unchanged! And, independent of its impiety, how cruel is that philosophy which, under pretence of superior illumination, by depriving us of this resource, would leave us exposed to the tossings of a tempestuous ocean, without compass, without solace, and without hope!

But besides this acknowledgment of the general administration of the Deity, it behoves us to feel and confess, in national calamities, the tokens of his displeasure. The evils which overtake nations are the just judgments of the Almighty. I am perfectly aware of the disadvantages under which we labour, when we insist on this topic, from its being so trite and familiar. Instead of troubling you with a general, and, I fear, unavailing descant on the manners of the age, I shall, therefore, content myself with calling your attention to a very few of what appear to me the most alarming symptoms of national degeneracy. Here we shall not insist so much on the progress of infidelity (though much to be deplored), as on an evil, to which, if we are not greatly mistaken, that progress is chiefly to be ascribed: I mean a gradual departure

from the peculiar truths, maxims, and spirit of christianity. Christianity, issuing perfect and entire from the hands of its Author, will admit of no mutilations nor improvements; it stands most secure on its own basis; and without being indebted to foreign aids, supports itself best by its own internal vigour. When, under the pretence of simplifying it, we attempt to force it into a closer alliance with the most approved systems of philosophy, we are sure to contract its bounds, and to diminish its force and authority over the consciences of men. It is dogmatic; not capable of being advanced with the progress of science, but fixed and immutable. We may not be able to perceive the use or necessity of some of its discoveries, but they are not on this account the less binding on our faith; just as there are many parts of nature,* whose purposes we are at a loss to explore, of which if any person were bold enough to arraign the propriety, it would be sufficient to

* "We ought not (says the great Bacon) to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. In this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, that I rather note an excess; whereto I have digressed, because of the extreme prejudice which both religion and philosophy have received from being *commixed together*, as that which undoubtedly will make an heretical religion and a fabulous philosophy."

This observation appears to me to deserve the most profound meditation; and lest the remarks on this subject should appear presumptuous from so inconsiderable a person, I thought it requisite to fortify myself by so great an authority.

reply that God made them. They are both equally the works of God, and both equally partake of the mysteriousness of their Author. This *integrity* of the Christian faith has been insensibly impaired; and the simplicity of mind with which it should be embraced, gradually diminished. While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay. The truths and mysteries which distinguished the christian from all other religions, have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others; and while infinite efforts have been made, by the utmost subtlety of argumentation, to establish the truth and authenticity of revelation, few have been exerted in comparison to shew what it really contains. The doctrines of the fall and of redemption, which are the two grand points on which the Christian dispensation hinges, have been too much neglected. Though it has not yet become the fashion (God forbid it ever should!) to deny them, we have been too much accustomed to confine the mention of them to oblique hints, and distant allusions. They are too often reluctantly conceded rather than warmly inculcated, as though they were the weaker or less honourable parts of christianity, from which we were in haste to turn away our eyes, although it is in reality these very truths which have in every age inspired the devotion of the church, and the rapture of the redeemed. This alienation

from the distinguishing truths of our holy religion accounts for a portentous peculiarity among christians, their being ashamed of a book which they profess to receive as the word of God. The votaries of all other religions regard their supposed sacred books with a devotion which consecrates their errors, and makes their very absurdities venerable in their eyes. They glory in that which is their shame: we are ashamed of that which is our glory. Indifference and inattention to the truths and mysteries of revelation, have led, by an easy transition, to a dislike and neglect of the book which contains them; so that, in a christian country, nothing is thought so vulgar as a serious appeal to the Scriptures; and the candidate for fashionable distinction would rather betray a familiar acquaintance with the most impure writers, than with the words of Christ and his apostles. Yet we complain of the growth of infidelity, when nothing less could be expected than that some should declare themselves infidels, where so many had completely forgot they were christians. They who sow the seed can with very ill grace complain of the abundance of the crop; and when we have ourselves ceased to abide in the words and maintain the honour of the Saviour, we must not be surprised at seeing some advance a step further, by openly declaring they are none of his. The consequence has been such as might be expected, —an increase of profaneness, immorality, and irreligion.

The traces of piety have been wearing out more and more, from our conversation, from our manners, from our popular publications, from the current literature of the age. In proportion as the maxims and spirit of christianity have declined, infidelity has prevailed in their room; for infidelity is, in reality, nothing more than a noxious spawn (pardon the metaphor) bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted christianity.

A lax theology is the natural parent of a lax morality. The peculiar motives, accordingly, by which the inspired writers enforce their moral lessons, the love of God and the Redeemer, concern for the honour of religion, and gratitude for the inestimable benefits of the christian redemption, have no place in the fashionable systems of moral instruction.* The motives almost exclusively urged are such as take their rise from the present state, founded on reputation, on honour, on health, or on the tendency of the things recommended to promote, under some form or other, the acquisition of worldly advantages. Thus even morality itself, by dissociating it from religion, is made to cherish the love of the world, and to bar the heart more effectually against the approaches of piety.

* If the reader wishes for a further statement and illustration of these melancholy facts, he may find it in Mr. Wilberforce's celebrated book on religion; an inestimable work, which has, perhaps, done more than any other to rouse the insensibility and augment the piety of the age.

Here I cannot forbear remarking a great change which has taken place in the whole manner of reasoning on the topics of morality and religion, from what prevailed in the last century, and, as far as my information extends, in any preceding age. This, which is an age of revolutions, has also produced a strange revolution in the method of viewing these subjects, the most important by far that can engage the attention of man. The simplicity of our ancestors, nourished by "the sincere milk of the word," rather than by the tenets of a disputatious philosophy, was content to let morality remain on the firm basis of the dictates of conscience and the will of God. They considered virtue as something *ultimate*, as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was any thing to which it stood merely in the relation of a *means*, or, that within the narrow confines of this momentary state any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*. It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion which professes to render us superior to the world, is in reality nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals, or of society. In their view, it had a nobler destination; it looked forward to eternity: and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was a union with its Author, in the perpetual fruition of God. They arranged these things in the following order:—Religion, comprehending the love, fear, and

service of the Author of our being, they placed first; social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the mere physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both. Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted: the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere hand-maid of social morality; social morality into an instrument of advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all. Nor have we deviated less from the example of antiquity than from that of our pious forefathers. The philosophers of antiquity, in the absence of superior light, consulted with reverence the permanent principles of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the best feelings of the heart, which they employed all the powers of reason and eloquence to unfold, to adorn, to enforce; and thereby formed a luminous commentary *on the law written on the heart.* The virtue which they inculcated grew out of the stock of human nature: it was a warm and living virtue. It was the moral man, possessing in every limb and feature, in all its figure and movements, the harmony, dignity, and variety which belong to the human form: an effort of unassisted nature to restore that image of God, which sin had mutilated and defaced. Imperfect, as might be expected, their morality was often erroneous; but in its great outlines it had all the stability of the human constitution, and its fundamental principles were coeval and coexistent with human nature. There

could be nothing fluctuating and arbitrary in its more weighty decisions, since it appealed every moment to *the man within the breast:* it pretended to nothing more than to give voice and articulation to the inward sentiments of the heart, and conscience echoed to its oracles. This, wrought into different systems, and under various modes of illustration, was the general form which morality exhibited from the creation of the world till our time. In this state revelation found it; and, correcting what was erroneous, supplying what was defective, and confirming what was right by its peculiar sanctions, superadded a number of supernatural truths and holy mysteries. How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new, must be fundamentally false; how is it, that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path which no eye has explored, no foot has trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a ledger-book of profit and of loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation.

All the elements and sentiments which entered into the essence of virtue before, are melted down and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation, and determined by expediency. In executing this plan, the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing, without exception, is made an affair of calculation, under which are comprehended, not merely the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance, until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here, nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart: all is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to "love God with all our heart, and all our strength, the first and great commandment," the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

Thus, by a strange inversion, the *indirect influence* of christianity, in promoting the temporal

good of mankind, is mistaken for its *principal end;* the skirts of her robe are confounded with her body, and the *powers of the world to come,* instead of raising our thoughts and contemplations from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator, are made subservient to the advancement of secular interests and passions. How far these sentiments accord with the dictates of inspiration, the most unlettered christian may easily decide. *Love not the world,* said the disciple who leaned on the breast of his Lord, *neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Such was the idea entertained by an inspired apostle of christian virtue. Let us now turn to the modern philosopher. Virtue, he will inform us (including the whole sum of our duties), is merely an expedient for promoting the interests and advantages of the present world; of that world, which, in the eyes of John, was passing away, and whose value he so solemnly depreciates. What admirable consistency! What elevated theology! If we can suppose this holy apostle acquainted with what passes on earth, what pleasure it must afford his glorified spirit, to find his sentiments so well understood, and so faithfully interpreted!

In former times it was supposed that one of the most effectual means of improvement in virtue was, the moral culture of the heart; and *to keep*

it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life, was thought an advice deserving the most serious attention. To examine frequently the state of the conscience, and to check the first risings of disorder there, was judged to be of the last importance.

It is easy to see how this moral discipline must fare under the doctrine of expediency, a doctrine which teaches man to be looking continually abroad: a doctrine which not only justifies, but enjoins, a distrust of the suggestions of the inward monitor; which will not permit the best feelings of the heart, its clearest dictates, its finest emotions, to have the smallest influence over the conduct; and, instead of yielding any thing to their direction, cites them at its bar.

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expedience is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact, it *has* produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gaiety of high life, and the low profligacy which falls under the lash of the law: a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation

to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher: maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments, as well as destroyed their authority, the distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of, the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment* or *feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society: it is what it *produces*, not what *it is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape* and *appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause; but must maintain a sacred neutrality, till Expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time, they are

* The unholy speculations of Mr. Godwin were founded entirely on this basis.

equally *candidates,* we assert it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to it, provided the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt, which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this system, as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a thick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric of society tottered to its base, the earth shook under their feet; the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amidst the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appals the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculations. Instead of revering the judgments, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency) to desolate his works, and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims!

But it is time to conclude this discussion, which has, perhaps, already fatigued by its length. I cannot help expressing my apprehension, that this desecration of virtue, this incessant domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, having already dethroned religion, and displaced virtue from her ancient

basis, will, if it is suffered to proceed, ere long shake the foundation of states, and endanger the existence of the civilized world. Should it ever become popular; should it ever descend from speculation into common life, and become the practical morality of the age, we may apply to such a period the awful words of Balaam; *Who shall live when God doth this?* No imagination can portray, no mind can grasp its horrors; nor, when the angel in the Apocalypse, to whom the keys are intrusted, shall be commissioned to open the bottomless pit, will it send forth a thicker cloud of pestilential vapour. If the apparent simplicity of this system be alleged in its favour, I would say, it is the simplicity of meanness, a simplicity which is its shame, a daylight which reveals its beggary. If an air of obscurity, on the contrary, is objected against that of better times, let it be remembered that every science has its *ultimate questions*, boundaries which cannot be passed; and that if these occur earlier in morals than in other inquiries, it is the natural result of the immensity of the subject, which, touching human nature in every point, and surrounding it on all sides, renders it difficult, or rather impossible, to trace it in all its relations, and view it in all its extent. Meanwhile, the shades which envelope, and will perhaps always envelope it in some measure, are not without their use, since they teach the two most important lessons we can learn,—the vanity of our reason, and the grandeur of our destiny.

It is not improbable some may be offended at the warmth and freedom of these remarks: my apology, however, rests on the infinite importance of the subject, my extreme solicitude to impress what appear to me right sentiments respecting it, together with the consideration, that the confidence which ill becomes the innovators of yesterday, however able, may be pardoned in the defenders, however weak, of a system which has stood the test and sustained the virtue of two thousand years.* Let us return, then, to the safe and sober

* The system which founds morality on utility, an utility, let it be *always* remembered, confined to the purposes of the present world, issued with ill omen from the school of infidelity. It was first broached, I believe, certainly first brought into general notice, by Mr. Hume, in his Treatise on Morals, which he himself pronounced *incomparably the best* he ever wrote. It was incomparably the best for his purpose; nor is it easy to imagine a mind so acute as his did not see the effect it would have in setting morality and religion afloat, and substituting for the stability of principle the looseness of speculation and opinion. It has since been rendered popular by a succession of eminent writers; by one especially (I doubt not with intentions very foreign from those of Mr. Hume), whose great services to religion in other respects, together with my high reverence for his talents, prevent me from naming him. This venerable author, it is probable, little suspected to what lengths the principle would be carried, or to what purposes it would be applied in other hands. Had he foreseen this, I cannot but imagine he would have spared this part of his acute speculations.

We have, happily, preserved to us, from antiquity, two complete Treatises on Morals, in which the authors profess to give us a complete view of our duties; the one composed by the greatest master of reason, the other of eloquence, the world ever saw. The first of these has distinguished, classified, and arranged the elements of *social morality*, which is all he could reach in the

paths of our ancestors; adhering, in all moral questions, to the dictates of conscience, regulated and informed by the divine word; happy to enjoy,

absence of revelation, with that acuteness, subtilty, and precision, for which he was so eminently distinguished. Whoever attentively peruses his Treatise, the Nicomachian Morals, I mean, will find a perpetual reference to the inward sentiments of the breast. He builds every thing on the human constitution. He all along takes it for granted, that there is a moral impress on the mind, to which, without looking abroad, we may safely appeal. In a word, Aristotle never lost the moralist in the accountant. He has been styled the Interpreter of Nature, and has certainly shewn himself a most able commentator on the *law written on the heart.* For Cicero, in all his philosophical works, as well as in his Offices, where he treats more directly on these subjects, he shews the most extreme solicitude, as though he had a prophetic glance of what was to happen, to keep the moral and natural world apart, to assert the supremacy of virtue, and to recognize those sentiments and vestiges from which he educes, with the utmost elevation, the *contempt of human things.* How humiliating the consideration, that, with superior advantages, our moral systems should be infinitely surpassed in warmth and grandeur by those of Pagan times; and that the most jejune and comfortless that ever entered the mind of man, and the most abhorrent from the spirit of religion, should have ever become popular in a christian country! This departure from the precedents of antiquity will not, by those who are capable of forming a judgment, be easily imputed to the superiority of our talents; it is rather the result of that tendency to *degradation* which has long marked our progress. Along with the simplicity of faith and a reverence for the Scriptures, our respect for the dignity (rightly understood) of human nature, and tenderness for its best interests, have been gradually impaired. A fearlessness of consequences, a hardihood of mind, a disposition to sacrifice every thing to originality, or to a pretended philosophical precision, have succeeded in their place. This, in my humble opinion, has been the great bane of modern speculation; and has rendered so much of it wild, ferocious, and destructive.

instead of sparks of our own kindling, the benefit of those luminaries which, placed in the moral firmament by a potent hand, have guided the church from the beginning, in her mysterious sojourn to eternity. *Stand in the way, and see; and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

Instead of demolishing the temple of christian virtue, from a presumptuous curiosity to inspect its foundations, let us rejoice they are laid too deep for our scrutiny. Let us *worship* in it; and, along with the *nations of them that are saved, walk in its light.*

Having endeavoured to point out the source of our degeneracy, in a departure from the doctrines and spirit of christianity, I hasten to despatch the remainder of this discourse; nor will it detain you long.

Whoever has paid attention to the manners of the day, must have perceived a remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, in which we have receded more and more from the spirit of christianity. Of this the term employed to denote a lofty sentiment of personal superiority supplies an obvious instance. In the current language of the times, *pride* is scarcely ever used but in a favourable sense. It will, perhaps, be thought the mere change of a term is of little consequence; but, be it remembered, that any remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, betrays a proportionable change in the ideas and feelings they are intended to denote. As pride has been transferred from the

list of vices to that of virtues, so humility, as a natural consequence, has been excluded, and is rarely suffered to enter into the praise of a character we wish to commend; although it was the leading feature in that of the Saviour of the world, and is still the leading characteristic of his religion: while there is no vice, on the contrary, against which the denunciations are so frequent as pride. Our conduct in this instance is certainly rather extraordinary, both in what we have embraced, and in what we have rejected; and it will surely be confessed, we are somewhat unfortunate in having selected that vice as the particular object of approbation, which God had already selected as the especial mark at which he aims the thunderbolts of his vengeance.

"Another symptom of degeneracy appears in the growing disregard to the external duties of religion; the duties more especially of the Lord's-day, and of public worship. It is supposed by such as have the best means of information, that throughout the kingdom, the number who regularly assemble for worship is far inferior to those who neglect it; that in our great towns and cities they are not one-fourth of the people, and in the metropolis a much smaller proportion. It is easy to foresee how the leisure afforded by the christian sabbath will be employed by those who utterly forget the design of its institution. It is somewhat remarkable that here the extremes meet, and that the public duties of religion are most slighted by the highest and

the lowest classes of society; by the former, I fear, from indolence and pride; by the latter, from ignorance and profligacy.

Too many of the first description, when they do attend, it is in such a manner as makes it evident they esteem it merely an act of condescension, to which they submit as an example to their inferiors, who, penetrating the design, and imitating their indifference rather than their devotion, are disgusted with a religion which they perceive has no hold on their superiors, and is only imposed upon themselves as a badge of inferiority and a muzzle of restraint. Could the rich and noble be prevailed upon for a moment to attend to the instructions of their Lord, instead of making their elevated rank a reason for neglecting these duties, they would learn that there are none to whom they are so necessary; since there are none whose situation is so perilous, whose responsibility is so great, and whose salvation is so arduous.

Here fidelity compels me to advert to a circumstance, which I mention with sincere reluctance, because it implies something like a censure on the conduct of those whom it is our duty to respect. You are, probably, aware I mean the assigning part of the Sunday to *military exercises*. When we consider how important an institution the christian sabbath is, how essential to the maintenance of public worship, which is itself essential to religion, and what a barrier it opposes to the impiety and immorality of the age; is it not to be

lamented that it should ever have been, in the smallest degree, infringed by legislative authority? The rest of the sabbath had been already too much violated, its duties too much neglected; but this is the first instance of the violation of it being publicly recommended and enjoined,* at a time too when we are engaged with an enemy whose very name conveys a warning against impiety. Our places of worship have been thinned by the absence of those who have been employed in military evolutions, and of a still greater number of gazers, whom such spectacles attract. Nor is the time lost from religious duties so much to be considered, as that tumult and hurry of mind, utterly incompatible with devotion, which are inseparable from military ideas and preparations. Surely it could never be the intention of the legislature, though such has been the effect, to detach the defenders of their country from the worshippers of God: nor is it to be supposed they adverted to the influence which a precedent of such high authority must have in divesting the sabbath of its sanctity in the eyes of the people, and of establishing the fatal epoch whence it was no longer to be revered as the ordinance of heaven. They had, we will believe, no such intention; but the innocence of the intention abates nothing of the mischief of the precedent.

* The Book of Sports, in the reign of James the First, is not an exception, as that, though sufficiently censurable, was not considered as a violation of the sabbath, considered as a day of *rest*.

As it is foreign from my purpose to make a complete enumeration of national sins, which would not only be a most painful task in itself, but quite incompatible with the limits of this discourse, I shall content myself with the mention of one more proof of the degeneracy of our manners. This proof is found in that almost universal profaneness which taints our daily intercourse, and which has risen to such a height as to have become a melancholy characteristic of our country. In no nation under heaven, probably, has the profanation of sacred terms been so prevalent as in this christian land. The name even of the Supreme Being himself, and the words he has employed to denounce the punishments of the impenitent, are rarely mentioned but in anger or in sport; so that were a stranger to our history to witness the style of our conversation, he would naturally infer we considered religion as a detected imposture; and that nothing more remained than, in return for the fears it had inspired, to treat it with the insult and derision due to a fallen tyrant. It is difficult to account for a practice which gratifies no passion, and promotes no interest, unless we ascribe it to a certain vanity of appearing superior to religious fear, which tempts men to make bold with their Maker. If there are hypocrites in religion, there are also, strange as it may appear, hypocrites in impiety, men who make an ostentation of more irreligion than they possess. An ostentation of this nature, the most irrational in the records of

human folly, seems to lie at the root of profane swearing. It may not be improper to remind such as indulge this practice, that they need not insult their Maker to shew that they do not fear him; that they may relinquish this vice without danger of being supposed to be devout, and that they may safely leave it to other parts of their conduct to efface the smallest suspicion of their piety.* To view this practice in the most favourable light, it indicates, as has been observed by a great living writer,† "a mind over which religious considerations have little influence." It also sufficiently accounts for that propensity to ridicule piety, which is one of our national peculiarities. It would be uncandid to suppose, that at the best times there was more piety on the continent than here: be this as it may, it never appears to have exposed its possessors to contempt; nor was the sublime devotion of Fenelon and of Pascal ever considered as forming a shade to their genius. The reverence for religion had not been worn away by the familiar abuse of its peculiar terms.

It will be expected something should be said on the *slave-trade*. Its enormity no words can express. But here we must feel a mixture of satisfaction and regret; of satisfaction, at finding it has excited such general indignation among the people; of regret, that notwithstanding this, it should still be continued. By the most earnest and unanimous remonstrances, addressed to those

* See vol. v. p. 340. Ed. † Dr. Paley.

who alone could abolish it, the people have purged themselves from this contamination. Their application was unsuccessful. The guilt and turpitude of this traffic now rest upon the heads of those who sanction, and of those who conduct it. From some recent events in the western colonies, it seems not unlikely the Deity is about to take this affair into his own hands, and to accomplish by his interposition what has been denied to the prayer of the nation.

It is far from being a pleasing employ; it is painful, it is distressing, to dwell on such topics; but it is necessary. Our disease has gone too far to admit of palliatives; our wounds are too deep to be healed, till they are searched and probed to the bottom. The only safe expedient which remains to be adopted, is an immediate return to God; *to forsake every one his evil way, and the violence that is in his hands, and cry mightily to him: and who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger from us?* At the same time, let it be remembered, that repentance is a personal concern. Instead of losing ourselves in a crowd, and resting in general confessions, we ought each one to examine his own ways, and turn from his own iniquity. We shall not fail, if we have the least piety, to lament the prevalence of sin around us, but we can repent only *of our own:* and however, in the present mixed and imperfect state, we may share in the judgments and calamities which other men's sins draw down, it is

those we commit ourselves which alone can do us ultimate injury. Our continuance here is but for a short time; after which, as many as are *purified and made white* will remove into another world, be placed under a higher economy, and be put in possession of *a kingdom that cannot be moved.*

Let me remind you that repentance is a duty of greater extent than many are apt to suppose, who, confining their view, on such occasions as these, to a few of the grosser disorders of their lives, pay little attention to the heart: they are satisfied with feeling a momentary compunction, and attempting a partial reformation, instead of crying with the royal penitent, *create in me a clean heart!* They determine to break off particular vices,—an excellent resolution as far as it goes,—without proposing to themselves a life of habitual devotion, without imploring, under a sense of weakness, that grace which can alone renew the heart, making, in the words of our Lord, the tree good, that the fruit may be good also. Let it cost us what uneasiness it may, let us resolve, at the present season, to examine our ways, to become acquainted with the state of our consciences, to enter with "the candle of the Lord" into the inmost recesses of the heart, and the *chambers of imagery,* whatever disorder or defilement they may conceal, or whatever alarm the knowledge of ourselves may excite; since to be apprised of danger is the first step to safety, and it will be infinitely better for us to judge and accuse ourselves now, than to be

judged and condemned hereafter. Happy those to whom a seasonable alarm shall suggest the means of a perpetual security. We need be under no apprehension, lest the cherishing of the sentiments we have recommended should lead to despondency. We have an High-Priest, *who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.* In the midst of the deepest humiliation, we are invited to look up to him, with a humble reliance on the efficacy of his blood which cleanses from all sin; and to intrust our prayers and our duties, disordered and imperfect at best, into his hands, that he may mingle them with the incense of his intercession, and present them with acceptance before God.

When Nineveh was threatened with destruction by the prophet Jonah, tidings were brought to the king, who proclaimed a fast. Penetrated with the profoundest awe of the divine displeasure, he enjoined a rigorous abstinence from food, which extended even to the brute creation, who were also commanded to be covered with sackcloth. For in the eyes of that penitent prince it seemed proper that every thing should wear an air of mourning and desolation, while it lay under the frown of its Maker. He himself *rose from his throne, laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* He rightly judged that the glitter of state, the distinctions of rank, and the splendour of royalty should disappear at a moment when all classes were alike awaiting

their doom; at a moment when the greatest as well as the least were made to feel they were potsherds of the earth, ready to be crumbled into dust. Such exemplary humiliation averted the divine anger, and Nineveh was spared. If our gracious Sovereign has (as we humbly believe) descended this day from his elevation, and laying aside his robes, humbled himself in the dust before the Majesty of heaven; if his nobles have followed his example, and the people have resolved to *turn every one from his evil way*, the duties of the season will afford a surer defence than all our military preparations: our salvation will issue from the Being *whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

As a people, the most certain means of ensuring lasting prosperity, and of enabling us to transmit, unimpaired, to those who shall succeed us, the rich inheritance devolved from our fathers, will be a speedy return to the spirit and practice of the gospel. We shall ill consult the true interests of revelation by disguising its peculiarities, in hope of conciliating the approbation of infidels, and of adapting it more to their taste—a mistaken and dangerous policy, by which we run imminent risk of catching *their* contagion, without imparting the benefit of *its* truths. Let us not for a moment blench from its mysteries: they are *mysteries of godliness;* and, however much they may surpass human reason, bear the distinct impress of a divine hand. We rejoice that they *are mysteries,* so far

from being ashamed of them on that account; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their *unsearchable riches*, and undefinable grandeur. In fine, let us draw our religion and morality entirely from the word of God, without seeking any deeper foundation for our duties than the *will* of the Supreme Being, an implicit and perfect acquiescence in which is the *highest virtue* a creature can attain.

Amidst many unfavourable symptoms of the state of morals amongst us, there are others of a contrary nature. We may hope, infidelity has nearly run its length. In truth, its sophistry, in the eyes of men of sense, has been much discredited by the absurdity of its tenets; and if any have been in danger of being seduced by the talents of its advocates, they have commonly found a sufficient antidote in their lives. We have learned to prize revelation more than ever, since we have seen the ludicrous mistakes, as well as serious disasters, of those mystics of impiety who chose rather to walk by an internal light than enjoy the benefit of its illumination. They have edified us much, without intending it: they have had the effect which the great critic of antiquity assigns as the purpose of the Tragic Muse, that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. Their zeal has excited an equal degree of ardour in a better cause, and their efforts to extirpate religion have been opposed by contrary efforts, to diffuse its influence, at home and

abroad, to a degree unexampled in modern times. A growing unanimity has prevailed among the good in different parties, who, finding a centre of union in the great truths of revelation, and in a solicitude for its interests, are willing to merge their smaller differences in a common cause. The number of the sincerely pious, we trust, is increasing among us, whose zeal, so far from suffering abatement from the confidence of infidelity, has glowed with a purer and more steady flame than ever. These are pleasing indications that the presence of the *Holy One of Israel* is still in the midst of us.

How it may please the Ruler of the universe to dispose the destinies of the two most powerful nations of the earth, which are, at this moment, laid in the balance together, it is impossible for us with certainty to predict. But when we consider how many of his sincere worshippers, how large a portion of his church, together with how rich a fund of wisdom, of talents, and of all those elements of social order and happiness which he must approve, are enclosed within the limits of this highly-favoured land, we cannot believe he intends to give it up a prey to his enemies. Our insular situation is favourable, our resources prodigious, and the preparations which have long been making, apparently every way equal to the danger of the crisis: but still we would place our ultimate reliance on Him who abases the proud, and exalts the lowly. It would be presumption to

imagine it in my power to add any thing to those considerations which have already produced such a general movement in defence of our liberties. The cause speaks for itself: it excites feelings, which words are ill able to express; involving every object and motive which can engage the solicitude, affect the interests, or inflame the heart, of man. After a series of provocations and injuries, reciprocally sustained and retaliated, the dispute betwixt us and our enemies is brought to a short issue; it is no longer which of the two nations shall have the ascendant, but which shall continue a nation: it is a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy circumstance that the contest did not take this shape at an earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious pretences of liberty into a favourable opinion of our enemies' designs. The popular delusion is passed; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt have dispelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, have torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality. The crimes of those with whom we have to contend are legible in every part of Europe. There is scarcely a man to be found who is not most perfectly acquainted with the meaning of that freedom they profess to bestow; that it is a freedom from the dominion of laws to pass under the yoke of slavery, and from the fear of God to plunge into crimes and impiety; an impious barter of all that is good for all that is ill, through the utmost

range and limits of moral destiny. Nor is it less easy to develope the character of our principal enemy. A man bred in the school of ferocity, amidst the din of arms, and the tumult of camps; his element war and confusion; who has changed his religion with his uniform, and has not spared the assassination of his own troops; it is easy to foresee what treatment such a man will give to his enemies should they fall into his power; to those enemies, especially, who, saved from the shipwreck of nations, are preserving as in an ark the precious remains of civilization and order; and whom, after destroying the liberties of every other country, he envies the melancholy distinction of being the only people he has not enslaved. Engaged with such an enemy, no weak hopes of moderation or clemency can tempt us for a moment to relax in our resistance to his power; and the only alternative which remains is, to conquer or to die.

Hence that unexampled unanimity which distinguishes the present season. In other wars we have been a divided people: the effect of our external operations has been in some measure weakened by intestine dissension. When peace has returned, the breach has widened, while parties have been formed on the merits of particular men, or of particular measures. These have all disappeared; we have buried our mutual animosities in a regard to the common safety. The sentiment of self-preservation, the first law which nature has impressed, has absorbed every other

feeling; and the fire of liberty has melted down the discordant sentiments and minds of the British Empire into one mass, and propelled them in one direction. Partial interests and feelings are suspended, the spirits of the body are collected at the heart, and we are awaiting with anxiety, but without dismay, the discharge of that mighty tempest which hangs upon the skirts of the horizon, and to which the eyes of Europe and of the world are turned in silent and awful expectation. While we feel solicitude, let us not betray dejection, nor be alarmed at the past successes of our enemy, which are more dangerous to himself than to us, since they have raised him from obscurity to an elevation which has made him giddy, and tempted him to suppose every thing within his power. The intoxication of his success is the omen of his fall. What, though he has carried the flames of war throughout Europe, and *gathered as a nest the riches of the nations, while none peeped, nor muttered, nor moved the wing;* he has yet to try his fortune in another field; he has yet to contend on a soil filled with the monuments of freedom, enriched with the blood of its defenders; with a people who, animated with one soul, and inflamed with zeal for their laws and for their prince, are armed in defence of all that is dear or venerable; their wives, their parents, their children, the sanctuary of God, and the sepulchre of their fathers. We will not suppose there is one who will be deterred from exerting himself in such a cause,

by a pusillanimous regard to his safety, when he reflects that he has already lived too long who has survived the ruin of his country; and that he who can enjoy life after such an event, deserves not to have lived at all. It will suffice us, if our mortal existence, which is at most but a span, be co-extended with that of the nation which gave us birth. We will gladly quit the scene, with all that is noble and august, innocent and holy; and instead of wishing to survive the oppression of weakness, the violation of beauty, and the extinction of every thing on which the heart can repose, welcome the shades which will hide from our view such horrors.

From the most fixed principles of human nature, as well as from the examples of all history, we may be certain the conquest of this country, should it be permitted to take place, will not terminate in any ordinary catastrophe, in any much less calamitous than utter extermination. Our present elevation will be the exact measure of our future depression, as it will measure the fears and jealousies of those who subdue us. While the smallest vestige remains of our former greatness, while any trace or memorial exists of our having been once a flourishing and independent empire, while the nation breathes, they will be afraid of its recovering its strength, and never think themselves secure of their conquest till our navy is consumed, our wealth dissipated, our commerce extinguished, every liberal institution abolished, our nobles extirpated; whatever in rank, character,

and talents gives distinction in society, called out and destroyed, and the refuse which remains swept together into a putrifying heap by the besom of destruction. The enemy will not need to proclaim his triumph; it will be felt in the more expressive silence of extended desolation.

Recollect for a moment his invasion of Egypt, a country which had never given him the slightest provocation; a country so remote from the scene of his crimes, that it probably did not know there was such a man in existence (happy ignorance, could it have lasted!); but while he was looking around him, like a vulture perched on an eminence, for objects on which he might gratify his insatiable thirst of rapine, he no sooner beheld the defenceless condition of that unhappy country, than he alighted upon it in a moment. In vain did it struggle, flap its wings, and rend the air with its shrieks: the cruel enemy, deaf to its cries, had infixed his talons, and was busy in sucking its blood, when the interference of a superior power forced him to relinquish his prey, and betake himself to flight. Will that vulture, think you, ever forget his disappointment on that occasion, or the numerous wounds, blows, and concussions he received in a ten years' struggle? It is impossible. It were folly to expect it. He meditates, no doubt, the deepest revenge. He who saw nothing in the simple manners and blood-bought liberties of the Swiss to engage his forbearance, nothing in proclaiming himself a Mahometan to revolt his

conscience, nothing in the condition of defenceless prisoners to excite his pity, nor in that of the companions of his warfare, sick and wounded in a foreign land, to prevent him from despatching them by poison, will treat in a manner worthy of the impiety and inhumanity of his character, a nation which he naturally dislikes as being free, dreads as the rivals of his power, and abhors as the authors of his disgrace.

Though these are undoubted truths, and ought to be seriously considered, yet I would rather choose to appeal to sentiments more elevated than such topics can inspire. To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with your station, to extend your views to a distant futurity, and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprises, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished: the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany, has completed that catastrophe; and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws, and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favourite abode: but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed, in the only aperture where it can be

successfully repelled, in the Thermopylæ of the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the fœderal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are intrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension

of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilized world. Go then, ye defenders of your country,* accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success, not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon, will grasp the sword of the Spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity, to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events

* A company of volunteers attended public worship on this occasion.—Ed.

of this period (and they will incessantly revolve them), will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready *to swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever,* they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours, and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty:* go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in addition to their hereditary valour, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence! Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with thine own; and, while led by thine hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley, and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination—chariots of fire, and horses of fire! *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER CLASSES:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

HERVEY LANE, LEICESTER,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

[PUBLISHED IN 1810.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

To attempt to disarm the severity of criticism by humiliation or entreaty, would be a hopeless task. Waving every apology, the author, therefore, has only to remark, that the motives of a writer must ever remain a secret, but the *tendency* of what he writes, is capable of being ascertained; and is in reality the only consideration in which the public are interested. The author is concerned at an unexpected coincidence in the text, betwixt this and a very excellent discourse, delivered on a similar occasion, and published by his much esteemed friend, the Rev. Francis Cox. The coincidence was entirely accidental, and the text in each instance being employed very much in the manner of a motto, it is hoped the train of thought will be found sufficiently distinct. He cannot conclude without recommending to the public, and to the young especially, the serious perusal of the above-mentioned animated and impressive discourse.

A SERMON.

PROVERBS xix. 2.

That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.

THROUGHOUT every part of this book, the author is copious, and even profuse, in the praises of knowledge. To stimulate to the acquisition of it, and to assist in the pursuit, is the professed design with which it was penned. *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young men knowledge and discretion.*

Though it is evident from many passages, that in the encomiums to which we have referred, the author had principally in view divine knowledge, yet from other parts it is equally certain he by no means intended to exclude from these commendations, knowledge in general; and as we propose this afternoon to recommend to your attention the Sabbath-day School established in this place, a few reflections on the utility of knowledge at large, and of religious knowledge in particular, will not be deemed unseasonable.

I. Let me request your attention to a few remarks on the utility of knowledge in general. It must strike us, in the first place, that the extent to which we have the faculty of acquiring it, forms the most obvious distinction of our species. In inferior animals, it subsists in so small a degree, that we are wont to deny it to them altogether; the range of their knowledge, if it deserve the name, is so extremely limited, and their ideas so few and simple. Whatever is most exquisite in their operations, is referred to an instinct, which, working within a narrow compass, though with undeviating uniformity, supplies the place, and supersedes the necessity, of reason. In inferior animals, the knowledge of the whole species is possessed by each individual of the species, while man is distinguished by numberless diversities in the scale of mental improvement. Now, to be destitute, in a remarkable degree, of an acquisition which forms the appropriate possession of human nature, is degrading to that nature, and must proportionably disqualify it for reaching the end of its creation.

As the power of acquiring knowledge is to be ascribed to reason, so the attainment of it mightily strengthens and improves it, and thereby enables it to enrich itself with further acquisitions. Knowledge, in general, expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment. By means of it, we become less dependent for

satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites, the gross pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. Instead of being continually solicited by the influence and irritation of sensible objects, the mind can retire within herself, and expatiate in the cool and quiet walks of contemplation. The Author of nature has wisely annexed a pleasure to the exercise of our active powers, and particularly to the pursuit of truth, which, if it be in some instances less intense, is far more durable than the gratifications of sense, and is, on that account, incomparably more valuable. Its duration, to say nothing of its other properties, renders it more valuable. It may be repeated without satiety, and pleases afresh on every reflection upon it. These are self-created satisfactions, always within our reach, not dependent upon events, not requiring a peculiar combination of circumstances to produce or maintain them; they rise from the mind itself, and inhere, so to speak, in its very substance. Let the mind but retain its proper functions, and they spring up spontaneously, unsolicited, unborrowed, and unbought. Even the difficulties and impediments which obstruct the pursuit of truth, serve, according to the economy under which we are placed, to render it more interesting. The labour of intellectual search resembles and exceeds the tumultuous pleasures of the chase; and the consciousness of overcoming a formidable obstacle,

or of lighting on some happy discovery, gives all the enjoyment of a conquest, without those corroding reflections by which the latter must be impaired. Can we doubt that Archimedes, who was so absorbed in his contemplations as not to be diverted by the sacking of his native city, and was killed in the very act of meditating a mathematical theorem, did not, when he exclaimed *Ευρηκα! ευρηκα!* I have found it! I have found it! feel a transport as genuine as was ever experienced after the most brilliant victory?

But to return to the moral good which results from the acquisition of knowledge; it is chiefly this, that by multiplying the mental resources, it has a tendency to exalt the character, and, in some measure, to correct and subdue the taste for gross sensuality. It enables the possessor to beguile his leisure moments (and every man has such) in an innocent, at least, if not in a useful, manner. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the public house for that purpose. His mind can find him employment when his body is at rest; he does not lie prostrate and afloat on the current of incidents, liable to be carried whithersoever the impulse of appetite may direct. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of *mental* good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and

the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged. The calm satisfaction which books afford, puts him into a disposition to relish more exquisitely the tranquil delight inseparable from the indulgence of conjugal and parental affection; and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and shun whatever would impair, that respect. He who is inured to reflection, will carry his views beyond the present hour; he will extend his prospect a little into futurity, and be disposed to make some provision for his approaching wants; whence will result an increased motive to industry, together with a care to husband his earnings, and to avoid unnecessary expense. The poor man who has gained a taste for good books, will in all likelihood become thoughtful; and when you have given the poor a habit of thinking, you have conferred on them a much greater favour than by the gift of a large sum of money, since you have put them in possession of the *principle* of all legitimate prosperity.

I am persuaded that the extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery, which are so prevalent among the labouring classes in many countries, are chiefly to be ascribed to the want of education. In proof of this we need only cast our eyes on the condition of the Irish, compared with that of the peasantry in Scotland. Among the former you behold nothing but beggary, wretchedness, and

sloth: in Scotland, on the contrary, under the disadvantages of a worse climate and more unproductive soil, a degree of decency and comfort, the fruit of sobriety and industry, are conspicuous among the lower classes. And to what is this disparity in their situation to be ascribed, except to the influence of education? In Ireland, the education of the poor is miserably neglected; very few of them can read, and they grow up in a total ignorance of what it most befits a rational creature to understand: while in Scotland the establishment of free schools* in every parish, an essential branch of the ecclesiastical constitution of the country, brings the means of instruction within the reach of the poorest, who are there inured to decency, industry, and order.

Some have objected to the instruction of the lower classes, from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and, by impairing the habits of subordination, endanger the tranquillity of the state; an objection devoid surely of all force

* In the "Edinburgh Christian Instructor" for 1816, the slight mistake which occurs above, in reference to "free schools" in North Britain, is thus corrected. "The truth is, that *free* schools could never have effected that improvement in the manners and intelligence of the lower orders in Scotland, for which they are so remarkable; and we have reason to bless the judicious liberality of our ancestors, who contented themselves with bringing education within the reach of the lower orders, by allowing limited salaries to the schoolmasters, *in aid of the school wages*, instead of going to the hurtful extreme which tends to render teachers careless and parents indifferent."—Ed.

and validity. It is not easy to conceive in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority and the obligation to obedience, should indispose them to obey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of ranks which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will detect and expose. The objection we have stated, implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious, and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudices and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion, is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano.

The true prop of good government is the opinion, the perception, on the part of the subject of benefits resulting from it; a settled conviction, in other words, of its being a public good. Now nothing can produce or maintain that opinion but knowledge, since opinion is a form of knowledge. Of tyrannical and unlawful governments, indeed, the support is fear, to which ignorance is as congenial as it is abhorrent from the genius of a free people. Look at the popular insurrections and massacres in France: of what description of persons were

those ruffians composed, who, breaking forth like a torrent, overwhelmed the mounds of lawful authority? Who were the cannibals that sported with the mangled carcasses and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the gardens of the Tuilleries? Were they refined and elaborated into these barbarities by the efforts of a too polished education? No: they were the very scum of the people, destitute of all moral culture, whose atrocity was only equalled by their ignorance, as might well be expected, when the one was the legitimate parent of the other. Who are the persons who, in every country, are most disposed to outrage and violence, but the most ignorant and uneducated of the poor? to which class also chiefly belong those unhappy beings who are doomed to expiate their crimes at the fatal tree; few of whom, it has recently been ascertained, on accurate inquiry, are able to read, and the greater part utterly destitute of all moral or religious principle.

Ignorance gives a sort of eternity to prejudice, and perpetuity to error. When a baleful superstition, like that of the church of Rome, has once got footing among a people in this situation, it becomes next to impossible to eradicate it; for it can only be assailed, with success, by the weapons of reason and argument, and to these weapons it is impassive. The sword of ethereal temper loses its edge, when tried on the scaly hide of this leviathan. No wonder the church of Rome is such a

friend to ignorance; it is but paying the arrears of gratitude in which she is deeply indebted. How is it possible for her not to hate that light which would unveil her impostures, and detect her enormities.

If we survey the genius of Christianity, we shall find it to be just the reverse. It was ushered into the world with the injunction, *Go and teach all nations,* and every step of its progress is to be ascribed to instruction. With a condescension worthy of its Author, it offers information to the meanest and most illiterate; but extreme ignorance is not a state of mind favourable to it. The first churches were planted in cities (and those the most celebrated and enlightened), drawn neither from the very highest nor the very lowest classes; the former, too often the victims of luxury and pride, the latter, sunk in extreme stupidity; but from the middle orders, where the largest portion of virtue and good sense has usually resided. In remote villages, its progress was extremely slow, owing, unquestionably, to that want of mental cultivation, which rendered them the last retreats of superstition; insomuch that in the fifth century, the abettors of the ancient idolatry began to be denominated *Pagani,* which properly denotes the inhabitants of the country in distinction from those who reside in towns. At the Reformation, the progress of the reformed faith went hand in hand with the advancement of letters; it had every where the same friends and the same enemies, and, next to its agreement with

the Holy Scriptures, its success is chiefly to be ascribed, under God, to the art of printing, the revival of classical learning, and the illustrious patrons of science attached to its cause. In the representation of that glorious period, usually styled the Millennium, when religion shall universally prevail, it is mentioned as a conspicuous feature, that *men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* That period will not be distinguished from the preceding, by men's minds being more torpid and inactive, but rather by the consecration of every power to the service of the Most High. It will be a period of remarkable illumination, during which *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as that of seven days.* Every useful talent will be cultivated, every art subservient to the interests of man, be improved and perfected; learning will amass her stores, and genius emit her splendour; but the former will be displayed without ostentation, and the latter shine with the softened effulgence of humility and love.

II. We have hitherto spoken of the advantages of *knowledge in general;* we proceed to notice the utility of *religious knowledge* in particular. Religion, on account of its intimate relation to a future state, is every man's proper business, and should be his chief care. Of knowledge in general, there are branches which it would be preposterous in the bulk of mankind to attempt to acquire

because they have no immediate connexion with their duties, and demand talents which nature has denied, or opportunities which Providence has withheld. But with respect to the primary truths of religion, the case is different; they are of such daily use and necessity, that they form not the materials of mental luxury, so properly, as the food of the mind. In improving the character, the influence of general knowledge is often feeble and always indirect; of religious knowledge the tendency to purify the heart is immediate, and forms its professed scope and design. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* To ascertain the character of the Supreme Author of all things, to know, as far as we are capable of comprehending such a subject, what is his moral disposition, what the situation we stand in towards him, and the principles by which he conducts his administration, will be allowed, by every considerate person, to be of the highest consequence. Compared to this, all other speculations and inquiries sink into insignificance; because every event that can befall us, is in his hands, and by his sentence, our final condition must be fixed. To regard such an inquiry with indifference, is the mark, not of a noble, but of an abject mind, which, immersed in sensuality, or amused with trifles, *deems itself unworthy of eternal life.* To be so absorbed in worldly pursuits, as to neglect future prospects, is a conduct that can plead no excuse, until it is ascertained beyond all

doubt or contradiction, that there is no hereafter, and that nothing remains but that we *eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* Even in that case, to forego the hope of immortality without a sigh; to be gay and sportive on the brink of destruction, in the very moment of relinquishing prospects, on which the wisest and best in every age have delighted to dwell, is the indication of a base and degenerate spirit. If existence be a good, the eternal loss of it must be a great evil: if it be an evil, reason suggests the propriety of inquiring why it is so, of investigating the maladies by which it is oppressed. Amidst the darkness and uncertainty which hang over our future condition, Revelation, by bringing life and immortality to light, affords the only relief. In the Bible alone, we learn the real character of the Supreme Being; his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth; the moral condition of man, considered in his relation to Him, is clearly pointed out; the doom of impenitent transgressors denounced; and the method of obtaining mercy, through the interposition of a divine mediator, plainly revealed. There are two considerations which may suffice to evince the indispensable necessity of scriptural knowledge.

1. The Scriptures contain an authentic discovery *of the way of salvation.* They are a revelation of mercy to a lost world; a reply to that most interesting inquiry, *What we must do to be saved.* The distinguishing feature of the gospel system, is the economy of redemption, or the gracious

provision the Supreme Being has, thought fit to make for reconciling the world to himself, by the manifestation in human nature of his own Son. It is this which constitutes it the *Gospel,* by way of eminence, or the glad tidings concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ, on the right reception of which, or its rejection, turns our everlasting weal or woe. It is not from the character of God, as our creator, it should be remembered, that the hope of the guilty can arise; the fullest developement of his essential perfections could afford no relief in this case, and therefore natural religion, were it capable of being carried to the utmost perfection, can never supersede the necessity of revealed. To inspire confidence, an express communication from heaven is necessary: since the introduction of sin has produced a peculiarity in our situation, and a perplexity in our prospects, which nothing but an express assurance of mercy can remove.

In what manner the blessed and only Potentate may think fit to dispose of a race of apostates, is a question on which reason can suggest nothing satisfactory, nothing salutary: a question, in the solution of which, there being no data to proceed upon, wisdom and folly fail alike, and every order of intellect is reduced to a level; for *who hath known the mind of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?* It is a secret which, had he not been pleased to unfold it, must have for ever remained in the breast of the Deity. This secret, in infinite mercy, he has condescended to

disclose: the silence, not that which John witnessed in the Apocalypse, of half an hour, but that of ages, is broken; the darkness is past, and we behold, in the gospel, the astonishing spectacle of *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses,* and sending forth his ambassadors to *entreat us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* To that strange insensibility with respect to the concerns of a future world, which is at once the indication and consequence of the fall, must we ascribe the languid attention with which this communication is received; instead of producing, as it ought, transports of gratitude and joy in every breast.

This, however we may be disposed to regard it, is unquestionably the grand peculiarity of the gospel, the exclusive boast and treasure of the Scriptures, and most emphatically *the way of salvation,* not only as it reveals the gracious intentions of God to a sinful world, but as it lays a solid foundation for the *supernatural* duties of faith and repentance. All the discoveries of the gospel, bear a most intimate relation to the character and offices of the Saviour; from him they emanate, in him they centre; nor is any thing we learn from the Old or New Testament of saving tendency, further than as a part of the truth as it is *in Jesus.* The neglect of considering revelation in this light, is a fruitful source of infidelity. Viewing it in no higher character than a republication of the law of nature, men are first

led to doubt the importance, and next the truth, of the discoveries it contains; an easy and natural transition, since the question of their importance is so complicated with that of their truth, in the Scriptures themselves, that the most refined ingenuity cannot long keep them separate. *It gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace.* While we contemplate it under this its true character, we view it in its just dimensions, and feel no inclination to extenuate the force of those representations which are expressive of its pre-eminent dignity. There is nothing will be allowed to come into comparison with it, nothing we shall not be ready to sacrifice for a participation of its blessings, and the extension of its influence. The veneration we shall feel for the Bible, as the depository of *saving knowledge*, will be totally distinct, not only from what we attach to any other book, but from that admiration its other properties inspire; and the variety and antiquity of its history, the light it affords in various researches, its inimitable touches of nature, together with the sublimity and beauty so copiously poured over its pages, will be deemed subsidiary ornaments, the embellishments of the casket, which contains the *pearl of great price.*

2. Scriptural knowledge is of inestimable value

on account of its supplying an infallible *rule of life.* To the most untutored mind, the information it affords on this subject is far more full and precise than the highest efforts of reason could attain. In the best moral precepts issuing from human wisdom, there is an incurable defect in that want of authority which robs them of their power over the conscience; they are obligatory no farther than their reason is perceived; a deduction of proofs is necessary, more or less intricate and uncertain, and even when clearest, it is still but the language of man to man, respectable as sage advice, but wanting the force and authority of law. In a well-attested revelation, it is the Judge speaking from the tribunal, the supreme Legislator promulgating and interpreting his own laws. With what force and conviction do those Apostles and Prophets address us, whose miraculous powers attest them to be the servants of the Most High, the immediate organs of the Deity! As the morality of the gospel is more pure and comprehensive than was ever inculcated before, so the consideration of its divine origination invests it with an energy of which every system not expressly founded upon it is entirely devoid. We turn at our peril from Him who speaketh to us from heaven.

Of an accountable creature, duty is the concern of every moment, since he is every moment pleasing or displeasing God. It is a universal element, mingling with every action, and qualifying every

disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct, as it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has consequences in a future world so certain and infallible, that it is represented in scripture as a seed, no part of which is lost, "for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that also shall he reap." That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate *holiness,* is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments, a painted sepulchre. Hence results the indispensable necessity, to every description of persons, of sound religious instruction, and of an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, as its genuine source.

It must be confessed, from melancholy experience, that a speculative acquaintance with the rules of duty, is too compatible with the violation of its dictates, and that it is possible for the convictions of conscience to be habitually overpowered by the corrupt suggestions of appetite. To see distinctly the right way, and to pursue it, are not precisely the same thing. Still nothing in the order of means promises so much success as the diligent inculcation of revealed truth. He who is acquainted with the *terrors of the Lord,* cannot live in the neglect of God and religion with present, any more than with future, impunity; the path of disobedience is obstructed, if not rendered impassable; and wherever he turns his eyes

he beholds the sword of divine justice stretched out to intercept his passage. Guilt will be appalled, conscience alarmed, and the fruits of unlawful gratification embittered to his taste.

It is surely desirable to place as many obstacles as possible in the path of ruin: to take care that the image of death shall meet the offender at every turn; that he shall not be able to persist without treading upon briers and scorpions, without forcing his way through obstructions more formidable than he can expect to meet with in a contrary course. If you can enlist the nobler part of his nature under the banners of virtue, set him at war with himself, and subject him to the necessity, should he persevere, of stifling and overcoming whatever is most characteristic of a reasonable creature, you have done what will probably not be unproductive of advantage. If he be at the same time reminded, by his acquaintance with the word of God, of a better state of mind being attainable, a better destiny reserved (provided they are willing and obedient) for the children of men, there is room to hope that, *wearied,* to speak in the language of the prophet, *in the greatness of his way,* he will bethink himself of the true refuge, and implore the Spirit of grace to aid his weakness, and subdue his corruptions. Sound religious instruction is a perpetual counterpoise to the force of depravity. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the commandment of the*

Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

While we insist on the absolute necessity of an acquaintance with the word of God, we are equally convinced it is but an instrument, which, like every other, requires a hand to wield it; and that, important as it is in the order of means, the Spirit of Christ only can make it effectual, which ought therefore to be earnestly and incessantly implored for that purpose. *Open mine eyes,* saith the Psalmist, *and I shall behold wonderful things out of thy law.* We trust it will be your care, who have the conduct of the school we are recommending to the patronage of this audience, to impress on these children a deep conviction of their radical corruption, and of the necessity of the agency of the Spirit, to render the knowledge they acquire practical and experimental. *In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand; but remember that neither he that soweth, nor he that watereth, is any thing; it is God that giveth the increase.* Be not satisfied with making them read a lesson, or repeat a prayer. By every thing tender and solemn in religion, by a due admixture of the awful considerations drawn from the prospect of death and judgment, with others of a more pleasing nature, aim to fix serious impressions on their hearts. Aim to produce a religious concern, carefully watch its progress, and endeavour to conduct it to a prosperous issue. Lead them to the

footstool of the Saviour; teach them to rely, as guilty creatures, on his merits alone, and to commit their eternal interests entirely into his hands. Let the salvation of these children be the object, to which every word of your instructions, every exertion of your authority, is directed. Despise the profane clamour which would deter you from attempting to render them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy, not doubting for a moment, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that the path to true happiness lies through purity, humility, and devotion. Meditate the worth of souls: meditate deeply the lessons the Scriptures afford on their inconceivable value and eternal duration. While the philosopher wearies himself with endless speculations on their physical properties and nature, while the politician only contemplates the social arrangements of mankind and the shifting forms of policy, fix *your* attention on the individual importance of man, as the creature of God, and a candidate for immortality. Let it be your highest ambition to train up these children for an unchanging condition of being. Spare no pains to recover them to the image of God; render familiar to their minds, in all its extent, the various branches of that *holiness* without which *none shall see the Lord.* Inculcate the obligation, and endeavour to inspire the love of that rectitude, that eternal rectitude, which was with God before time began, was embodied in the person of his Son, and in its lower

communications, will survive every sublunary change, emerge in the dissolution of all things, and be impressed, in refulgent characters, on the new heavens and the new earth, *in which dwelleth righteousness.* Pray often with them, and for them, and remind them of the inconceivable advantages attached to that exercise. Accustom them to a punctual and reverential attendance at the house of God: insist on the sanctification of the Sabbath, by such a disposal of time, as is suitable to a day of rest and devotion. Survey them with a vigilant and tender eye, checking every appearance of an evil and depraved disposition the moment it springs up, and encouraging the dawn of piety and virtue. By thus *training them up in the way they should go,* you may reasonably hope that *when old, they will not depart from it.*

We congratulate the nation, on the extent of the efforts employed, and the means set on foot, for the improvement of the lower classes, and especially the children of the poor, in moral and religious knowledge, from which we hope much good will accrue, not only to the parties concerned, but to the kingdom at large. These are the likeliest, or rather, the only expedients that can be adopted, for forming a sound and virtuous populace; and if there be any truth in the figure, by which society is compared to a pyramid, it is on them its stability chiefly depends: the elaborate ornament at the top will be a wretched compensation for the want of solidity in the lower parts of

the structure. These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose on the lap of ignorance. If there ever were a season, when public tranquillity was ensured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past. The convulsed state of the world will not permit unthinking stupidity to sleep, without being appalled by phantoms, and shaken by terrors, to which reason, which defines her objects, and limits her apprehensions, by the reality of things, is a stranger. Every thing in the condition of mankind announces the approach of some great crisis, for which nothing can prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge, probity, and the fear of the Lord. While the world is impelled, with such violence, in opposite directions; while a spirit of giddiness and revolt is shed upon the nations, and the seeds of mutation are so thickly sown, the improvement of the mass of the people will be our grand security; in the neglect of which, the politeness, the refinement, and the knowledge accumulated in the higher orders, weak and unprotected, will be exposed to imminent danger, and perish like a garland in the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

AT HIS ORDINATION OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH, AT STRETTON, WARWICKSHIRE.

[PUBLISHED IN 1812.]

WITH SENTIMENTS OF THE HIGHEST ESTEEM,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT HIS REQUEST,

IS INSCRIBED TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

AND BROTHER,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following Discourse would sooner have made its appearance, but for circumstances in which the public are too little interested, to render it necessary or proper for me to explain: nor should I have adverted to the time of its publication, did it not seem strange that, having been preached on a public occasion, it should be committed to the press more than a twelve-month after the delivery.

With respect to the Sermon itself, the author begs leave to bespeak the indulgence of his readers for introducing sentiments with which they must be perfectly familiar, requesting them to recollect that, on practical subjects, the most common thoughts are usually the most important, and that originality is the last quality we seek for in advice. If it have any tendency to do good beyond the occasion of its delivery, by reminding my highly-esteemed brethren in the ministry of the duties and obligation attached to their sacred function, the end proposed will be answered. The worthy person to whom it was addressed, gave a specimen

of his liberality, in engaging me to take so leading a part in his ordination, when our difference of sentiment on the subject of Baptism was well known; a subject which has, unhappily, been a frequent occasion of alienating the minds of christians from each other. How much is it to be lamented, that the christian world should be so violently agitated by disputes, and divided into factions, on points, which, it is allowed, in whatever way they are decided, do not enter into the essentials of christianity! When will the time arrive, when the disciples of Christ shall cordially join hand and heart with all who *hold the head*, and no other terms of communion be insisted upon in any church, but what are necessary to constitute a real christian? The departure from a principle so directly resulting from the genius of christianity, and so evidently inculcated and implied in the sacred Scriptures, has, in my apprehension, been productive of infinite mischief; nor is there room to anticipate the period of the universal diffusion and triumph of the christian religion, but in consequence of its being completely renounced and abandoned.

What can be more repugnant to the beautiful idea which our Saviour gives us of his church, as *one fold under one shepherd*, than the present aspect of Christendom, split into separate and hostile communions, frowning defiance on each other, where each erects itself upon *party principles*, and selects its respective watch-word of contention, as though

the epithet of militant, when applied to the church, were designed to announce, not a state of conflict with the powers of darkness, but of irreconcilable intestine warfare and opposition. But it is necessary to quit a subject which, though painfully interesting, would necessarily lead to reflections inconsistent with the limits of this preface.

It may be more to the purpose to remark, that the substance of the following discourse was delivered in London, at the anniversary of an academical institution, recently established in the neighbourhood of that metropolis, for educating young men for the ministry in the Baptist denomination. The institution to which we refer, is under the immediate superintendence of the Rev. William Newman. I cannot let the present occasion pass, of earnestly and respectfully recommending this infant seminary to the patronage of the religious public. There was a time, we are aware, when doubts were entertained, in some serious minds, of the eligibility of training young men for the ministry, by a preparatory course of study. These scruples, we believe, have long since subsided, and a conviction felt by intelligent men of all denominations, of the expedience, if not the necessity, of instructing candidates for the ministry in the principles of science and literature. Learning is no longer dreaded as the enemy of piety; nor is it supposed that the orthodoxy of a public teacher of religion derives any security from his professed ignorance on every other subject. Along

with this revolution in the sentiments of a certain class of christians, circumstances have arisen, connected with the more general diffusion of knowledge and the state of society, which render a higher degree of mental cultivation than was heretofore needed, indispensably requisite. The Baptist denomination, in common with other christians, have not failed to advert to this urgent and increasing demand for cultivated talent in their ministers, although they have long had occasion to lament the scantiness and inadequacy of their means of supplying it. To the Bristol Academy, the only seminary they possessed till within these few years, they feel the highest obligations, for supplying them with a succession of able and faithful pastors, who have done honour to their churches: and few things would give the patrons and founders of the seminary, for which I am pleading, more concern, than the suspicion of entertaining views unfavourable to that academy. They respect its claim of seniority; they revere the character of its excellent President; they contemplate, with the highest satisfaction, the beneficial result of its operations, conspicuous in most parts of the kingdom:—but they are too well acquainted with the disinterested motives of its friends and benefactors, to suspect them of wishing to monopolize the education of ministers connected with the denomination. They feel as little jealousy of the seminary recently established in Yorkshire, which has already produced good fruits, under the culture

and superintendance of the excellent Mr. Steadman. Convinced, however, of there being still occasion for an enlargement of the means of instruction, and having, by the munificence of a generous individual, been presented with a house and premises well adapted to academical purposes, they could feel no hesitation in accepting so noble a gift, or in seconding the pious and benevolent design of the founder. The institution is yet in its infancy, and subsists on a small scale. They look to the smiles of heaven, and to the liberality of a christian public, and, especially, to the piety and opulence of the professors of religion in the metropolis, who have never been wanting in the zealous support of institutions tending to promote the glory of God and the best interest of mankind, for such an enlargement of their funds and resources as, seconded by the efforts of its worthy tutor, shall render it a permanent and extensive blessing.

LEICESTER,
December 31, 1811.

A DISCOURSE.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 1.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

As you have requested me to address you upon the present occasion, I am persuaded you will deem no apology necessary for the use of that freedom which the nature of the service to which you have invited me demands, combined with those sentiments of high esteem which your character will always inspire. Having, with the accustomed solemnities, been invested with the pastoral office over this church, you will permit me to remind you of the discouragements on the one hand, and the supports on the other, which you may reasonably look for in your ministerial warfare, as far as they are naturally suggested to us by the passage of scripture selected for the basis of our present discourse.

If it is necessary for the private christian, before he assumes a religious profession, to count the

cost; to the minister it cannot be less so, that he may not be surprised by unexpected trials, nor dismayed at the encounter of difficulties for which he has made no preparation. A just estimate of the nature and magnitude is an important qualification for the proper discharge of whatever function we are called to exert. As you are neither a novice in the ministry, nor have failed to reflect deeply on the consequences of your present engagements, you will not suspect me of attempting, by the hints which may be suggested, to give you information, but merely *to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance.*

I. Let me request your attention to the sources of *discouragement* connected with the office you have undertaken.

1. They are such as arise, in part, from the nature of the office itself, which is appointed for the purpose of converting souls to God, and conducting them in the path to eternal life. To you, in common with other christian pastors, is committed the ministry of reconciliation, the office of promulgating that system of truth which is designed to renew the world and sanctify the church. Under the highest authority you are enjoined to use your utmost efforts *to open blind eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* The bare mention of such an employment is enough to convince us the difficulties attending it are of no ordinary magnitude,

and to make us exclaim with an apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

The minds of men are naturally indisposed to the reception of divine truth. The truths of the gospel are not merely of a speculative nature, which need only to be stated with their proper evidence in order to ensure their success: there are in the mind latent prejudices against which they strongly militate, and which, when excited, naturally produce opposition. Mankind are disposed to think well of themselves, to view their virtues through a magnifying medium, and to cast their deficiencies and vices into the shade. Dissatisfied, as they often are, with their outward condition, they have yet little or no conviction of their spiritual wants; but with respect to these are ready to imagine, with the Laodiceans, that they *are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing*. Hence, it is with extreme difficulty they are brought to acquiesce in the humiliating representations, made by the oracles of God, of their native guilt and misery. They will readily confess they are not perfectly innocent or faultless; they have their imperfections as well as others, but they are far from believing that they are actually under the wrath and displeasure of the Almighty. They feel, on the whole, satisfied with themselves, and, by setting their supposed good qualities and actions against their bad ones, contrive to adjust their account in such a manner as leaves a considerable balance in their favour.

On the mercy of God they feel no objection to profess their reliance; deeming it more decent, and even more safe, than to challenge his justice; but it is easy to perceive that the mercy of which they speak is of such a nature, that they would look upon it as an absurdity to suppose it could be withheld. In short, they are the whole who need no physician.

The gospel presupposes a charge of guilt; it assumes, as an indubitable fact, the universal apostasy of our race, and its consequent liability to perish under the stroke of the divine anger; nor can you acquit yourself of the imputation of handling the word of God deceitfully, if, from false delicacy or mistaken tenderness, you neglect the frequent inculcation of this momentous truth. You will find it, however, no easy matter to fasten the charge on the conscience; which, when it seems to be admitted, will often amount to nothing more than a vague and general acknowledgment, which leaves the heart quite unaffected. To convince effectually is, indeed, the work of a superior agent.

The very attempt to produce that humiliating sense of unworthiness and weakness, which is essential to a due reception of the gospel, will frequently excite disgust, should it terminate in no worse consequences. You will be reproached as the messenger of evil tidings, and suspected of taking a pleasure in overwhelming the soul with dark and melancholy forebodings. By a part

of your hearers you will possibly be regarded as an unnatural character, and as having in your religion a tincture of what is savage and inhuman; in consequence of which, they who refuse to profit by your admonitions, will be apt to apply to you the language of the king of Israel, *I hate him, for he always prophesieth evil of me, and not good.* Of the common apostasy, one of the most distinguishing features is, a stupefaction and insensibility in relation to whatever is of a spiritual nature, together with a levity and carelessness which it requires the utmost effort of the christian ministry to dispel.

If you should be successful in awakening a salutary concern in the breasts of your hearers, and exciting them to inquire what they must do to be saved, fresh difficulties await you. The enemy will leave no artifice untried to divert it, and to wear it off, by such a succession of cares and vanities, that as much attention and address will be requisite to maintain it till it issues in a saving effect, as to produce it at first. There are many, who, after appearing for a time earnestly engaged in the pursuit of salvation, have, in consequence of stifling convictions, become more callous and insensible than ever, as iron is hardened in the fire. The grand scope of the christian ministry is to bring men home to Christ; but ere they arrive thither, there are numerous by-paths into which those who are awakened are in danger of diverting, and of finding a delusive repose,

without coming, as humble penitents, to the foot of the cross. They are equally in danger of catching at premature consolation, and of sinking into listless despondency. *Withhold thy throat from thirst,* said the prophet Jeremiah, *and thy foot from being unshod; but thou saidst, there is no hope, for I have loved strangers, and after them I must go.* In the pursuit of eternal good, the heart is extremely inconstant and irresolute; easily prevailed on, when the peace it is in quest of is delayed, to desist from further seeking. During the first serious impressions, the light which unveils futurity often shines with too feeble a ray to produce that perfect and plenary conviction which permits the mind no longer to vacillate; and the fascination of sensible objects eclipses the powers of the world to come. Nor is there less to be apprehended from any other quarter. The conscience, roused to a just sense of the danger to which the sinner is exposed by his violation of the laws of God, is apt to derive consolation from this very uneasiness; by which means it is possible that the alarm, which is chiefly valuable on account of its tendency to produce a consent to the overtures of the gospel, may ultimately lull the mind into a deceitful repose. The number, we fear, is not small, of those, who, though they have never experienced a saving change, are yet under no apprehensions respecting their state, merely because they can remember the time when they felt poignant convictions. Mistaking what

are usually the preliminary steps to conversion, for conversion itself, they deduce from their former apprehensions an antidote against present fears; and from past prognostics of danger, an omen of their future safety. With persons of this description, the flashes of a superficial joy, arising from a presumption of being already pardoned, accompanied with some slight and transient relishes of the word of God, are substituted for that new birth, and that lively trust in the Redeemer, to which the promise of salvation inseparably belongs. Such were those who received the seed into stony ground, and who, having heard the word of God, *anon with joy received it, but having no depth of earth, it soon withered away.* Others endeavour to sooth the anguish of their minds by a punctual performance of certain religious exercises, and a partial reformation of conduct; in consequence of which they sink into mere formalists; and confounding the instruments of religion with the end, their apparent melioration of character diverts their attention from their real wants, and, by making them insensible of the extent of their malady, obstructs their cure. Instead of imploring the assistance of the great Physician, and implicitly complying with his prescriptions, they have recourse to palliatives, which assuage the anguish and the smart, without reaching the seat, or touching the core, of the disorder.

Were the change, which the gospel proposes to effect, less fundamental and extensive than it is,

we might the more easily flatter ourselves with being able to carry its designs into execution. Did it aim merely to polish the exterior, to tame the wildness, and prune the luxuriance of nature, without the implanting of a new principle, the undertaking would be less arduous. But its scope is much higher; it proposes not merely to reform, but to renew; not so much to repair the moral edifice, as to build it afresh; not merely, by the remonstrances of reason, and the dictates of prudence, to engage men to lay a restraint upon their vices, but, by the inspiration of truth, to become new creatures. The effects of the gospel on the heart are compared, by the prophet, to the planting of a wilderness, where what was barrenness and desolation before, is replenished with new productions. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar-tree, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-tree together, that they may know, and consider, and understand, that the hand of the Lord hath done this.* Although the change is frequently slow, and the Spirit of God, in effecting it, may proceed by imperceptible steps and gentle insinuations, the issue is invariably the same; nor can any representation do justice to its dignity. How great the skill requisite in those who are to be the instruments of producing it!

To arrest the attention of the careless, to subdue the pride and soften the obduracy of the human heart, so that it shall stoop to the authority

of an unseen Saviour, is a task which surpasses the utmost efforts of human ability, unaided by a superior power. In attempting to realize the design of the christian ministry, we are proposing to call the attention of men from the things which are seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal; to conduct them from a life of sense to a life of faith; to subdue, or weaken at least, the influence of a world, which, being always present, is incessantly appealing to the senses, and soliciting the heart, in favour of a state, whose very existence is ascertained only by testimony. We call upon them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny the strongest and most inveterate propensities, and to renounce the enjoyments which they have tasted and felt, for the sake of a happiness to which they have no relish. We must charge *them*, as they value their salvation, not to love the world, who have been accustomed to make it the sole object of their attachment, and to return to their allegiance to that almighty and invisible Ruler from whom they have deeply revolted. We present to them, it is true, *a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined;* we invite them to entertainments more ample and exquisite, than, but for the gospel, it had entered into the heart of man to conceive; but we address our invitations to minds fatally indisposed, alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favour, and no delight in his converse. The souls we address,

though originally formed for these enjoyments, and utterly incapable of being happy without them, have lost, through the fall, that right taste and apprehension of things, which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings; and, like Ezekiel, we prophecy to dry bones in the valley of Vision, which will never live but under the visitation of that breath which bloweth where it listeth. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has been a frequent source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend upon human agency.

2. To these difficulties, which arise from the nature of the work, abstractedly considered, must be added, those which are modified by a variety of circumstances, and which result from that diversity of temper, character, and situation, which prevails in our auditory. To the several classes of which it consists, it is necessary *rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion of meat in due season.* The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from

what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say which we should most anxiously guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or inflaming the wounds which we ought to heal. A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel, is ill-judged and pernicious; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation, which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self-examination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny;

and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart.* It is thus the christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

To men of different casts and complexions, it is obvious, a corresponding difference in the selection of topics, and the method of appeal, is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons, with the reiteration of parental solicitude: there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning; nor apt, though firm believers in Revelation, to be strongly moved by naked assertions, even from that quarter. There are others of a softer temperament, who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos. Minds of an obdurate make, and which have been rendered callous by long habits of vice, must be appalled and subdued by the terrors of the Lord; while others are capable of being *drawn with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Some we must save with fear, plucking them out of the fire; on others we*

must have compassion, making a difference. You will recollect that he who spake as never man spake, mild, gentle, insinuating in his addresses to the multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for sanctimonious hypocrites. In this part of our ministerial function, we shall do well to imitate St. Paul, who became "all things to all men, that he might win some;" combining, in his efforts for the salvation of souls, the utmost simplicity of intention with the utmost versatility of address.

May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons, we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance? Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address? I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught, would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous

stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos, to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs, prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages, will instantly evaporate; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.

To return to the subject: whatever the mode of address, or whatever the choice of topics, there are two qualities inseparable from religious instruction; these are *seriousness* and *affection.* In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only

barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. "Of whom I have told you before," said St. Paul, and "now tell you *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." What force does that affecting declaration derive from those tears! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker. Whoever has attended to the effect of addresses from the pulpit, must have perceived how much of their impression depends upon this quality, which gives to sentiments comparatively trite, a power over the mind beyond what the most striking and original conceptions possess without it.

Near akin to this, and not inferior in importance, is the second quality we mentioned, *seriousness*. It is scarcely necessary to remark, how offensive and unnatural is every violation of it in a religious discourse, which is, however, of wider extent than is generally imagined, including not merely jesting, buffoonery, and undisguised levity of every sort, but also whatsoever, in composition or manner, is inconsistent with the supposition of the speaker

being deeply in earnest; such as sparkling ornaments, far-fetched images, and that exuberance of flowers which seems evidently designed to gratify the fancy, rather than to touch the heart. When St. Paul recommends to Timothy that *sound speech which cannot be condemned,* it is probable he refers as much to the propriety of the vehicle, as to the purity of the instruction. There is, permit me to remind you, a sober dignity both of language and of sentiment, suited to the representations of religion in all its variety of topics, from which the inspired writers never depart, and which it will be our wisdom to imitate. In describing the pleasures of devotion, or the joys of heaven, there is nothing weak, sickly, or effeminate: a chaste severity pervades their delineations, and whatever they say appears to emanate from a serious mind, accustomed to the contemplation of great objects, without ever sinking under them from imbecility, or attempting to supply a deficiency of interest, by puerile exaggerations and feeble ornaments. The exquisite propriety of their representations is chiefly to be ascribed to their habitual seriousness; and the latter to their seeing things as they are.

3. Having touched on the principal difficulties attending the *public* exercise of the ministry, it may be expected something will be said on its more private functions. To affirm it to be the duty of a pastor to visit his people *often,* is, perhaps, affirming too much; the more frequently he converses with them, however, provided his

conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his ministry acceptable. The seasonable introduction of religious topics is often of such admirable use, that there are few qualities more enviable than the talent of "teaching from house to house;" though the modern state of manners, I am aware, has rendered this branch of the pastoral office much more difficult than in former times. In a country village, where there is more simplicity, less dissipation, and less hurry of business than in large towns, prudent exertions of this kind may be considered as eminently proper and beneficial. The extent to which they should be carried must be determined by circumstances, without attempting to prescribe any other rule than this, that the conversation of a christian minister should be always such as is adapted to strengthen, not impair, the impression of his public instructions. Though it is not necessary, nor expedient, for him to be always conversing on the subject of religion, his conversation should invariably have a religious tendency; that whatever excursions he indulges, the return to serious topics may be easy and natural. The whole cast of his character should be such as is adapted to give weight to the exercise of his ministerial functions. On the peculiar force with which the obligations of virtue attach to a christian teacher, the purity and correctness of your own conduct, while it would embolden me to speak with the greater freedom, make it less necessary for me to insist.

You are aware that moral delinquency in *him*, produces a sensation as when an armour-bearer fainteth; that he can neither stand nor fall by himself; and that it is impossible for him to deviate essentially from the path of rectitude, without incurring the guilt and infamy of Jeroboam, who is never mentioned but to be stigmatized as he *who taught Israel to sin. Be thou an ensample to the flock in faith, in purity, in conversation, in doctrine, in charity.* Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master; and give to our conduct the correctness of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. *Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world,* said our Saviour to his disciples, whom he was about to send forth in the character of public teachers. As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed, we cannot make a wrong step without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings, and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a christian minister is little less than a public triumph over the religion he inculcates: and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion

his efforts to the advantages resulting from his success, we must be aware how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function.

With the utmost propriety of conduct, and the greatest skill exerted in your work, we dare not flatter you with the prospect of unmingled success. Under the most judicious method of treatment, the maladies of some will prove incurable, and they will perish under your hand. While to some the gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, to others it will prove *the savour of death unto death*; and in the course of your labours, you will meet with frequent disappointments where you have formed the most sanguine expectations. *Some who did run well, will afterwards be hindered; and of others, who have clean escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being afterwards entangled therein, the latter end will be worse than the beginning.* Many a Demas, it is probable, will forsake you, *having loved this present world*; and by many of your hearers, who now evince the most zealous attachment, you may hereafter be considered as an enemy, because you tell them the truth. In certain instances, your ministry will be attended with consequences which you cannot contemplate without deep concern; for the sword of the Spirit is an awful weapon, which will exert, where it fails to inflict a salutary wound, its *destructive* edge. Against those of your hearers who reject your message,

though now an ambassador of peace, and often a weeping suppliant at their feet, you will ere long appear a swift witness before God, and be compelled by your voice, to exasperate the accents of vengeance, and augment the vials of wrath. *You are set for the rising and falling of many in Israel.*

II. But it is time to turn to a more pleasing part of our subject, and to remind you of some of the supports by which these sources of discouragement are balanced.

1. The office you have undertaken is of divine institution. The unhappy disputes which have prevailed in the church respecting the proper channels for conveying, and the legitimate mode of vesting it, are so far from weakening or perplexing the evidence of this truth, that they may be considered as so many concurrent suffrages in its favour; since it is allowed, on all hands, that the christian ministry is an ordinance of God; an expedient for the improvement of mankind, of his devising, and supported by his authority. But of that wisdom which pervades the works of God, the church is the principal scene; *to the intent,* saith the apostle, *that to principalities and powers, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.* Hence we may be certain that so leading a branch of its constitution as that under our consideration, cannot fail of being adapted, in the best possible manner, to promote the interest of religion; nor is it difficult to perceive, that if

men are to be wrought upon by reason and persuasion, the setting apart an order for the express purpose of instructing them in the concerns of salvation, must have a beneficial tendency; an order, be it remembered, not appointed like the priests of pagan antiquity, for the performance of ceremonies, but for the inculcation of truth; not to conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices, but to *watch for souls as those that must give an account.* Nothing similar to this was known in the heathen religions; it is peculiar to christianity, and evincing the simple wisdom of its author, is as original in its conception, as it is admirable in its effects. Its simplicity, its distance from whatever is dazzling in the eyes of mankind, is one of its highest recommendations; for the christian minister is beautifully compared to a fisherman, who would only be embarrassed by those instruments and appendages which belong to more splendid, but less useful, employments.

2. Another consideration calculated to afford us encouragement is, that the materials of our work are ready furnished to our hand, and, at the same time, of a nature admirably adapted to our purpose. Our office is that of stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom; our duty, faithfully to dispense the stores which superior wisdom and opulence have provided. It is not necessary for us to stretch our invention in the discovery of topics and arguments fitted to move the mind, and impel it in a right direction, which, if we may

judge from past experience, would be a most unpromising undertaking. A doctrine, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be retained and preserved, just as we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its primitive simplicity. Like the works of nature, while it exhibits, at first view, an impress of its author, in the unequivocal character it bears of purity and majesty, it improves on a closer examination, and the more deeply it is investigated, the more the wisdom of the contrivance, in its exquisite adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, becomes conspicuous. As the discovery of a way of salvation for a fallen race, of the method by which a guilty and degenerate creature may recover the image and favour of his Maker, which we must ever remember is its most essential characteristic, what is wanting to its perfection? what information or assurance beyond what it contains, calculated to awe, enlighten, convince, and encourage? The facts it exhibits, supported by clear and indubitable testimony, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of truth, with more than the grandeur of fiction; and the doctrines connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. To a serious mind, the truths of the christian religion appear with such an air of

unaffected greatness, that, in comparison of these, all other speculations and reasonings seem like the amusements of childhood. When the Deity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of the Son of God, the sanctification of the church, and the prospects of glory, have engaged our contemplation, we feel, in turning our attention to other objects, a strange descent, and perceive, with the certainty of demonstration, that, as the earth is too narrow for the full developement of these mysteries, they are destined by their consequences and effects, to impregnate an eternal duration. We are not at all surprised at finding the ancient prophets searched into these mysteries with great but unsuccessful diligence, that the angels desire to look into them, or that the apostles were lost in the contemplation of those riches which they proclaimed and imparted. Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence, are wanted for that purpose: you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let his doctrine enlighten, his love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun. Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more immediately they are derived from that source, and the less they are tinctured with human distinctions

and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious. Let them be taken fresh from the spring. *You,* I am persuaded, will not satisfy yourself with the study of Christianity in narrow jejune abridgments and systems, but contemplate it, in its utmost extent, as it subsists in the sacred oracles; and, in investigating these, you will permit your reason and conscience an operation, as free and unfettered, as if none had examined them before. The neglect of this produces, too often, an artificial scarcity, where some of the choicest provisions of the household are exploded or overlooked.

When we inculcate, with so much earnestness, an attention to the mind of Christ, as exhibited in the Scriptures, let us not be understood to exclude his precepts, or to countenance, for a moment, the too frequent neglect of Christian morality. While you delight in displaying the riches of divine grace, conspicuous in the work of redemption, as the grand motive to love and trust in the Redeemer, you will not forget frequently to admonish your hearers that he only *loveth him who keepeth his sayings;* the illustration of which, in their bearings upon the different relations and circumstances of life, will form, if you follow the apostolic example, a most important branch of your ministry. Not content with committing the obligation of morality to the arbitration of feeling, much less with faintly hinting at it, as an obvious inference from orthodox doctrine, you will illustrate its principles with an

energy, a copiousness, a fulness of detail, proportioned to its acknowledged importance. You will not be silent on the precepts, from an apprehension of infringing on the freedom of the gospel, nor sink the character of the legislator in that of the Saviour of the church. A morality, more elevated and pure than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus, will breathe through your sermons, founded on a basis which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise—a morality of which the love of God, and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer, are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all its own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the gospel. Truth and holiness are, in the christian system, so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one, lays the only foundation for the other. For the *illustration* of particular branches of morals, we may consult pagan writers on ethics, with advantage; but in search of *principles,* it is at our peril that we desert the school of Christ; since "we are complete in him," and all the moral excellence to which we can aspire is but christianity embodied; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, the impress

of the gospel upon the heart. The perfection of the christian system, considered as the instrument of renovating the human mind, is the second consideration.

3. The third consideration to which I would direct your attention, is, that of its being the dispensation of the Spirit. To this the apostle immediately refers in the context, where he is contrasting the christian with the Jewish institute. *Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious?* From this circumstance he infers the superior dignity of the christian ministry. The miraculous gifts, intended for a sign to unbelievers, and to aid the gospel, during its first struggle with the powers of pagan darkness, have long since ceased with the exigency that called them forth; but the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Spirit remains, and will continue to the end of time; the express declaration of our Saviour not admitting a doubt of its perpetuity. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* To the world, who, in their unrenewed state, are unsusceptible of his

sanctifying impress, he is promised, in the preparatory form of a spirit of conviction; to believers, he is promised as an indwelling principle, an ever-present Deity, who consecrates the hearts of the faithful to be his perpetual abode. Hence the ministers of Christ are not dependent for success on the force of moral suasion; not merely the teachers of an external religion, including truths the most momentous, and duties of the highest obligation; they are also the instruments through whom a supernatural agency is exerted. And hence, in the conversion of souls, we are not to compare the difficulties to be surmounted, with the feeble resources of human power, but with his, with whom nothing is impossible. To this the inspired historian every where directs our attention, as alone sufficient to account for the signal success which crowned the labours of the first preachers. If a great multitude at Antioch turned to the Lord, it was because *the hand of the Lord was with them;* if Lydia believed, in consequence of giving attention to the things that were spoken, it was because the *Lord opened her heart;* if Paul planted and Apollos watered with success, it was *the Lord who gave the increase;* and highly as they were endowed, and though invested with such extensive authority, they did not presume to count upon any thing from themselves; their sufficiency was of God. As the possibility of such an influence can be doubted by none who believe in a Deity, so the peculiar consolation derived

from the doctrine that asserts it, seems to be this, that it renders what was merely possible, certain; what was before vague and undetermined, fixed, by reducing the interposition of the Almighty, in the concerns of salvation, to a stated method and a settled law. The communication of the Spirit, to render the gospel efficacious, becomes a standing ordinance of heaven, and a full security for its final triumph over every opposing force. *My word,* said the Lord by the prophet, *shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto I sent it.* At the same time, connected as it is by the very tenour of the promise, with the publication of an external revelation, and professing to set its seal only to the testimony of Jesus, it precludes, as far as possible, every enthusiastic pretension, by leaving the appeal to scripture as full and uncontrolled as if no such agency were supposed. It is strange that any should be found to deny a doctrine so consolatory, under the pretence of its derogating from the sufficiency of Revelation, when it not only ascribes to it all the efficacy that can belong to an instrument, or external means, but confers the highest honour upon it, by marking it out as the only fountain of instruction to which the agency of the Deity is inseparably attached. The idea of his immediate interposition must necessarily increase our veneration for whatever is connected with it; and let it ever be remembered, that the internal illumination of the Spirit is merely intended to qualify the mind for distinctly

perceiving, and cordially embracing those objects, and no other, which are exhibited in the written word. To dispel prejudice, to excite a disposition for inquiry, and to infuse that love of the truth, without which we can neither be transformed by its power nor bow to its dictates, is the grand scope of spiritual agency; and how this should derogate from the dignity of the truth itself, it is not easy to conceive. The inseparable alliance between the Spirit and the Word, secures the harmony of the divine dispensations; and since that spirit of truth can never contradict himself, whatever impulse he may give, whatever disposition he may communicate, it involves no irreverence towards that divine agent to compare his operations with that standing revelation, which, equally claiming him for its author, he has expressly appointed for the trial of the spirits.

Let me earnestly entreat you, by keeping close to the fountain of grace, to secure a large measure of its influence. In your private studies, and in your public performances, remember your absolute dependence on superior aid; let your conviction of this dependence become so deep and practical as to prevent your attempting any thing in your own strength, after the example of St. Paul, who, when he had occasion to advert to his labours in the gospel, checks himself by adding, with ineffable modesty, *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* From that vivid perception of truth, that full assurance of faith, which is its inseparable

attendant, you will derive unspeakable advantage in addressing your hearers; a seriousness, tenderness, and majesty, will pervade your discourses, beyond what the greatest unassisted talent can command. In the choice of your subjects it will lead you to what is most solid and useful, while it enables you to handle them in a manner the most efficacious and impressive. Possessed of this celestial unction, you will not be under the temptation of neglecting a plain gospel in quest of amusing speculations, or unprofitable novelties; the most ordinary topics will open themselves with a freshness and interest, as though you had never considered them before: and *the things of the Spirit* will display their inexhaustible variety and depth. You will pierce the invisible world; you will look, so to speak, into eternity, and present the essence and core of religion, while too many preachers, for want of spiritual discernment, rest satisfied with the surface and the shell. It will not allow us to throw one grain of incense on the altar of vanity; it will make us forget ourselves so completely as to convince our hearers we do so; and, displacing every thing else from the attention, leave nothing to be felt or thought of, but the majesty of truth, and the realities of eternity.

In proportion to the degree in which you possess this sacred influence, will be the earnestness with which you implore it in behalf of your hearers. Often *will you bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will*

grant unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance among them that believe.

On the one hand, it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for a simple dependence upon spiritual aid; and, on the other, that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of divine interposition, as far as *they* are concerned; for when has "the arm of the Lord been revealed" to those pretended teachers of christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labour in a field, respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and, despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no *divine* assistance.

4. Let me request you to consider the dignity and importance of the profession which you have assumed. I am aware that the bare mention of these, as attributes of the christian ministry (especially when exercised among Protestant dissenters), may provoke a smile: we contend, however, that if the dignity of an employment is to be estimated, not by the glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude and duration of the consequences involved in its success, the ministerial function is a high and honourable one. Though it is not permitted us to magnify ourselves, we may be allowed to magnify our office; and, indeed, the juster the apprehensions we entertain of what belongs to it, the deeper the conviction we shall feel of our defects. Independently of every other consideration, that office cannot be mean which the Son of God condescended to sustain: for *the word which we preach first began to be spoken by the Lord;* and, while he sojourned upon earth, that Prince of life was chiefly employed in publishing his own religion. That office cannot be mean, whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness—the illumination of the understanding—the communication of truth—and the production of principles which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. As the material part of the creation was formed for the sake of the immaterial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and vice; that

labour cannot want dignity, which is exerted in improving man in his highest character, and fitting him for his eternal destination. Here alone is certainty and durability: for, however highly we may esteem the arts and sciences, which polish our species and promote the welfare of society; whatever reverence we may feel, and ought to feel, for those laws and institutions whence it derives the security necessary for enabling it to enlarge its resources and develope its energies, we cannot forget that these are but the embellishments of a scene we must shortly quit—the decorations of a theatre, from which the eager spectators and applauded actors must soon retire. *The end of all things is at hand.* Vanity is inscribed on every earthly pursuit, on all sublunary labour; its materials, its instruments, and its objects will alike perish. An incurable taint of mortality has seized upon, and will consume them ere long. The acquisitions derived from religion, the graces of a renovated mind, are alone permanent. This is the mystic enclosure, rescued from the empire of change and death; this is the field which the Lord has blessed; and this word of the kingdom the seed, which alone produces immortal fruit, the very bread of life, with which, under a higher economy, the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, will feed his flock, and replenish his elect, through eternal ages. How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the soul an interior dominion —to illuminate its powers by a celestial light—and

introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of spirits! What an honour to be employed as the instrument of conducting that mysterious process by which men are born of God; to expel from the heart the venom of the old serpent; to purge the conscience from invisible stains of guilt; to release the passions from the bondage of corruption, and invite them to soar aloft into the regions of uncreated light and beauty; *to say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves!* These are the fruits which arise from the successful discharge of the christian ministry; these the effects of the gospel, wherever it becomes the power of God unto salvation: and the interests which they create, the joy which they diffuse, are felt in other worlds.

In insisting on the dignity attached to the ministerial office, it is far from my intention to supply fuel to vanity, or suggest such ideas of yourself as shall tempt you to "lord it over God's heritage." Let the importance of your station be rather felt and acknowledged in its beneficial results, than ostentatiously displayed; and the consciousness of it, instead of being suffered to evaporate in authoritative airs and pompous pretensions, produce a concentration of your powers. If the great apostle was content to be a helper of the joy, without claiming dominion over the faith, of his converts, how far should we be from advancing such a claim! If he served the Lord with humility and many

tears; if he appeared among the churches which he planted, "in fear, and in weakness, and with much trembling," we may learn how possible it is to combine, with true dignity, the most unassuming deportment, and the deepest conviction of our weakness and unworthiness, with a vigorous discharge of whatever belongs to the apostolic, much more to the pastoral, office. The proper use to be made of such considerations as have now been suggested is, to *stir up the gift which is in us*, to apply ourselves to our work with becoming resolution, and anticipate, in dependence on the divine blessing, important effects. The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the christian ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth.

5. Recollect, for your encouragement, the reward that awaits the faithful minister. Such is the mysterious condescension of divine grace, that although it reserves to itself the exclusive honour of being the fountain of all, yet, by the employment of human agency in the completion of its designs, it contrives to multiply its gifts, and to lay a foundation for eternal rewards. When the church, in the perfection of beauty, shall be presented to Christ, as a bride adorned for her husband, the faithful pastor will appear as the friend of the

bridegroom, who *greatly rejoices because of the bridegroom's voice.* His joy will be the joy of his Lord, inferior in degree, but of the same nature, and arising from the same sources: while he will have the peculiar happiness of reflecting that he has contributed to it; contributed, as an humble instrument, to that glory and felicity of which he will be conscious he is utterly unworthy to partake. To have been himself the object of mercy, to have been the means of imparting it to others, and of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ, will produce a pleasure which can never be adequately felt or understood, until we see him as he is. From that oneness of spirit, from that inseparable conjunction of interest, which will then be experienced in its utmost extent, will arise a capacity of sharing the triumph of the Redeemer, and of participating in the delight with which he will survey his finished work, when a new and fairer creation shall arise out of the ruins of the first. And is this the end, he will exclaim, of all my labours, my toils, and watchings, my expostulation with sinners, and my efforts to console the faithful! and is this the issue of that ministry under which I was often ready to sink! and this the glory, of which I heard so much, understood so little, and announced to my hearers with lisping accents, and a stammering tongue! well might it be styled the glory *to be revealed.* Auspicious day! on which I embarked in this undertaking, on which the love of Christ, with a sweet and sacred violence,

impelled me to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs. With what emotion shall we, who, being entrusted with so holy a ministry, shall find mercy to be faithful, hear that voice from heaven, *Rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!* With what rapture shall we recognize, amidst an innumerable multitude, the seals of our ministry, the persons whom we have been the means of conducting to that glory!

Hence we discern the futility of the objection against the doctrine of future rewards, drawn from an apprehension, that to be actuated by such a motive, argues a mean and mercenary disposition; since the reward to which we aspire, in this instance, at least, grows out of the employment in which we are engaged, and will consist in enjoyments which can only be felt and perceived by a refined and elevated spirit. The success of our undertaking will, in reality, reward itself, by the complete gratification it will afford to the sentiments of devotion and benevolence, which, in their highest perfection, form the principal ingredient in future felicity. To have cooperated in any degree towards the accomplishment of that purpose of the Deity to reconcile all things to himself, by reducing them to the obedience of his Son; which is the ultimate end of all his works; to be the means of recovering, though it were but an inconsiderable portion of a lapsed and degenerate race, to eternal happiness, will yield a satisfaction exactly

commensurate to the force of our benevolent sentiments, and the degree of our loyal attachment to the supreme Potentate. The consequences involved in *saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins,* will be duly appreciated in that world where the worth of souls, and the malignity of sin, are fully understood; while, to extend the triumphs of the Redeemer, by forming him in the hearts of men, will produce a transport which can only be equalled by the gratitude and love we shall feel towards the Source of all our good.

Before I close this discourse, which has, perhaps, already detained you too long, let me suggest one reflection which so naturally arises from the view we have taken of the ministerial office, that I cannot think it right to pass it over in silence. The consideration to which we allude respects the advantages possessed by the christian minister for the cultivation of personal piety. *Blessed is the man,* said the royal Psalmist, *whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee: blessed are they who dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* If he was so strongly impressed with a conviction of the high privilege annexed to the priesthood, by virtue of its being allowed a nearer approach to God, in the services of the sanctuary, the situation of a christian minister is not less distinguished, nor less desirable. It is the only one in which our general calling as christians, and our particular calling as men, perfectly coincide. In a life occupied in actions that terminate in the present

moment, and in cares and pursuits, extremely disproportionate to the dignity of our nature, but rendered necessary by the imperfection of our state; it is but little of their time that the greater part of mankind can devote to the direct and immediate pursuit of their eternal interests. A few remnants, snatched from the business of life, is all that most can bestow. In our profession, the full force and vigour of the mind may be exerted on that which will employ it for ever; on *religion*, the final centre of repose; the goal to which all things tend, which gives to time all its importance, to eternity all its glory; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes which surround him, as incoherent and unmeaning as the leaves which the Sybil scattered in the wind. Our inaptitude to be affected in any measure proportioned to the intrinsic value of the interest in which we are concerned, and the objects with which we are conversant, is partly to be ascribed to the corruption of nature, partly to the limitation of our faculties. As far as this disproportion is capable of being corrected, the pursuits connected with our office are unquestionably best adapted to that purpose, by closely fixing the attention on objects which can never be contemned, but in consequence of being forgotten; nor ever surveyed with attention, without filling the whole sphere of vision. Though the scene of our labour is on earth, the things to which it relates subsist in eternity. We can give no account

of our office, much less discharge any branch of it with propriety and effect, without adverting to a future state of being; while, in a happy exemption from the tumultuous cares of life, our only concern with mankind, as far as it respects our official character, is to promote their everlasting welfare; our only business on earth, the very same that employs those exalted spirits, who are sent forth on embassies of mercy, *to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation.* Our duties and pursuits are distinguished from all others by their immediate relation to the ultimate end of human existence; so that, while secular employments can be rendered innocent only by an extreme care to avoid the pollutions which they are so liable to contract, the ministerial functions bear an indelible impress of sanctity. The purposes accomplished by the ministry of the gospel, in the restoration of a fallen creature to the image of his Maker, are not among the *things which were made for man:* they are the *things for which man was made;* since, without regard to time or place, they are essential to his perfection and happiness. How much of heaven is naturally connected with an office whose sole purpose is to conduct man thither! and what a superiority to the love of the world may be expected from men who are appointed to publish that dispensation which reveals its danger, detects its vanity, rebukes its disorders, and foretells its destruction!

He must know little of the world, and still less

of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amidst the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

To the ordinary occupations of life we are rather indebted for the trial of our virtue than for the matter, or the motive; and, however criminal it would be to neglect them, in our present state, they can only be reduced under the dominion of religion, by a general intention of pleasing God. But, in carrying into effect the designs of the gospel, we are communicating that pure element of good, which, like the solar light, pervades every part of the universe, and forms, there is every reason to believe, the most essential ingredient in the felicity of all created beings.

If, in the actual commerce of the world, the noblest principles are often sacrificed to mean expedients, and the rules of moral rectitude made to bend to the indulgence of vain and criminal passions, how happy for us that we are under the

necessity of contemplating them in their abstract grandeur, of viewing them as an emanation of the divine beauty; as the immutable law of the creation, embodied in the character of the Saviour, and illustrated in the elevated sentiments, the holy lives, and triumphant deaths, of prophets, saints, and martyrs! *We* are called, every moment, to ascend to first principles, *to stand in the council of God,* and to imbibe the dictates of celestial wisdom in their *first* communication, before they become debased, and contaminated, by a mixture with grosser elements.

The bane of human happiness is ordinarily not so much an absolute ignorance of what is best, as an inattention to it, accompanied with a habit of not adverting to prospects the most certain and the most awful. But how can we be supposed to contract this inadvertence, who are incessantly engaged in placing truth in every possible light, tracing it in its utmost extent, and exhibiting it in all its evidence? Can we be supposed to forget *that day and that hour, of which no man knoweth,* who are stationed as watchmen to give the alarm, to announce the first symptoms of danger, and to cry in the ears of a sleeping world, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh:* or, however inattentive others may be to the approach of our Lord, can it ever vanish from our minds, who are detained by him in his sanctuary, on purpose to preserve it pure, to trim the golden lamps, and maintain the hallowed fire, that he may find nothing neglected,

or in disorder, when he *shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in?*

Men are ruined in their eternal interests, by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuit of earthly good, as to neglect the state of their hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge our office with effect, without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man—without tracing the secret operations of nature and of grace—without closely inspecting the causes of revival, and of decay, in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs and plausible artifices of temptation; in all which we shall be successful, just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds.

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by living as though they were their own, and neglecting to realize the certainty of a future account. But it must surely require no small effort to divert our attention from this truth, who have not only the same interest in it with others, but, in consequence of the care of souls, possess a responsibility of a distinct and awful character; since not one of those to whom that care extends, can fall short of salvation through our neglect or default, but *his blood will be required at our hands.* Where, in short, can we turn our eyes, without meeting with incentives to piety? What part of the sacred function can we touch, which will not remind us

of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or, where shall we not find ourselves in a temple, resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?

I feel a pleasing conviction, that, in consequence of deriving from your ministry that spiritual aid it is so adapted to impart, both your piety and usefulness will continue to increase, and by being intimately incorporated, aid and strengthen each other; so that your profiting shall appear unto all men, and while you are watering others, you yourself shall be abundantly watered of God. Thus will you be enabled to adopt the language of the beloved apostle, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you.* Thus will you possess that unction from which your hearers cannot fail, under the divine blessing, to reap the highest benefit; for while we are exploring the mines of revelation, for the purpose of exhibiting to mankind the *unsearchable riches of Christ;* we are not in the situation of those unhappy men, who merely toil for the advantage of others, and dare not appropriate to themselves an atom of that precious ore, on which their labour is employed: we are permitted and invited, first to enrich ourselves, and the more we appropriate, the more shall we impart. It is my earnest prayer, my dear brother, *that you may feed the church of the Lord which he has purchased with his own blood; that you may*

make full proof of your ministry; be instant in season and out of season; teach, exhort, and rebuke, with all long-suffering, and authority. Then, should you be spared to your flock, you will witness the fruit of your labours in a spiritual plantation, growing under your hand, adorned with *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified;* and while, neglecting worldly considerations, you are intent on the high ends of your calling, inferior satisfactions will not be wanting, but you will meet, among the seals of your ministry, with fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers. Or should your career be prematurely cut short, you will have lived long enough to answer the purposes of your being, and to leave a record in the consciences of your hearers, which will not suffer you soon to be forgotten. Though dead, you will still speak; you will speak from the tomb; it may be, in accents more powerful and persuasive, than your living voice could command.*

* Of this we have a striking instance in the premature death of the late Mr. Spencer, of Liverpool. The sensation excited by the sudden removal of that extraordinary young man, accompanied with such affecting circumstances, has not subsided, nor abated, as we are informed, much of its force. The event, which has drawn so great a degree of attention, has been well improved in several excellent discourses on the occasion. The unequalled admiration he excited while living, and the deep and universal concern expressed at his death, demonstrate him to have been no ordinary character; but one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the great Author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, while he is hastening to *make them up amongst his jewels.* The high hopes

entertained of this admirable youth, and the shock, approaching to consternation, occasioned by his death, will, probably, remind the classical reader of the inimitable lines of Virgil on Marcellus.

> O nate, ingentem luctum ne quære tuorum :
> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent.

The writer of this deeply regrets his never having had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers; but from all he has heard from the best judges, he can entertain no doubt, that his talents in the pulpit were unrivalled, and that, had his life been spared, he would, in all probability, have carried the art of preaching, if it may be so styled, to a greater perfection than it ever attained, at least, in this kingdom. His eloquence appears to have been of the purest stamp, effective, not ostentatious, consisting less in the striking preponderance of any one quality, requisite to form a public speaker, than in an exquisite combination of them all; whence resulted an extraordinary power of impression, which was greatly aided by a natural and majestic elocution. To these eminent endowments, he added, from the unanimous testimony of those who knew him best, a humility and modesty, which, while they concealed a great part of his excellencies from himself, rendered them the more engaging and attractive. When we reflect on these circumstances, we need the less wonder at the passionate concern excited by his death. For it may truly be said of him, as of St. Stephen, *that devout men made great lamentation over him.* May the impressions produced by the event never be effaced; and, above all, may it have the effect of engaging such as are embarked in the Christian ministry to *work while it is called to-day.*

AN ADDRESS

TO

THE REV. EUSTACE CAREY,

JANUARY 19, 1814,

ON HIS DESIGNATION AS A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA.

AN ADDRESS.

As it has been usual, in the designation of a Missionary, after solemnly commending him to God by prayer, to deliver a short address; in compliance with a custom, not perhaps improper, or illaudable, I shall request your attention to a few hints of advice, without attempting a regular charge, which I neither judge myself equal to, nor deem necessary, since on your arrival in India you will receive from your venerable relative, Dr. Carey, instruction more ample and appropriate than it is in my power to communicate.

When the first Missionaries who visited these western parts were sent out, their designation was accompanied with prayer and fasting; whence we may infer that fervent supplication ought to form the distinguishing feature in the exercises appropriated to these occasions.

An effusion of the spirit of prayer on the church of Christ is a surer pledge of success in the establishment of Missions, than the most splendid exhibitions of talent. As there is no engagement more entirely spiritual in its nature, nor whose success

is more immediately dependent on God than that on which you are entering; to none is that spiritual aid more indispensably necessary, which is chiefly awarded to the prayers of the faithful.

Separate to me, said the Holy Ghost to the disciples assembled at Antioch, *separate to me Barnabas and Saul, to the work whereunto I have called them.* When the omniscient Searcher of hearts separates a christian minister from his brethren, and assigns him a distinct work, it implies the previous perception of certain qualifications for its successful discharge not generally possessed; for though none can give the increase but God, much of his wisdom is to be traced in the selection of instruments fitted to his purpose. The first and most essential qualification for a Missionary is a decided predilection for the office; not the effect of sudden impulse, but of serious, deep consideration; a predilection strengthened and matured by deliberately counting the cost. Every man has his proper calling; and while the greater part of christian teachers are perfectly satisfied with attempting to do all the good in their power in their native land, there are others of a more enterprising character, inflamed with the holy ambition of carrying the glad tidings beyond the bounds of Christendom; like the great apostle of the Gentiles, who was determined not to build on another man's foundation, but if possible to preach Christ in regions where his name was not known. The circumstances which contribute to such a resolution

are various, often too subtle and complicated to admit of a distinct analysis: a constitutional ardour of mind, a natural neglect of difficulties and dangers, an impatience of being confined within the trammels of ordinary duties, together with many accidental associations and impressions, may combine to form a missionary spirit; nor is it so necessary minutely to investigate the causes which have led to a given determination, as the legitimacy of the object, and the purity of the motive.

We adore the prolific Source of all good, in the variety and discrimination of his gifts, by which he imparts a separate character and allots a distinct sphere of operation to the general and essential principles which form the christian and the minister. *He gave some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

The sacred impulse to which we have adverted, I am certain you have felt in no common degree, and that it has been your ardent wish to be employed as a messenger to the heathen, from the time you devoted yourself to the ministry. Of your possessing this most essential prerequisite for the office you have undertaken, it is impossible for those who know you to entertain a doubt.

The next qualification of whose necessity I must be allowed to remind you, is singular *self-devotement*, without a degree of which it is not possible to be a christian, still less to any useful purpose a

minister, least of all a missionary. In resolving to quit your native country, and to relinquish your nearest connexions, with little expectation of beholding them again in the flesh, you have given decisive indications of this spirit; nor, to a mind like yours, exquisitely alive to the sensibilities of nature and friendship, can the sacrifice you have already made be deemed inconsiderable. But as it is still impossible for you to conjecture the extent of the privations and trials to which, in the pursuit of your object, you may be exposed, your situation is not unlike that of Abraham, who, being commanded to leave his own country and his father's house, went out not knowing whither he went. As you are entering on an untried scene, where difficulties may arise to exercise your patience and fortitude, of which you can form but a very inadequate conception, you will do well to contemplate the example, and meditate the words of St. Paul, in circumstances not very dissimilar: *And now I go up bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that in every city the Holy Ghost witnesseth that bonds and affliction await me: but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord to fulfil it.* The love of ease, or the indulgence of secular ambition, would be fatal to the object you are pursuing; nor, in your situation, is there any thing so much to be dreaded as a divided heart, a spirit which hesitates betwixt the calls of duty

and the attractions of the world. *To arm yourself with the same mind that was in Christ, who himself suffered, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps,* is a most indispensable part of your duty. In proportion as you feel yourself a stranger upon the earth, eagerly attached to none of its enjoyments or pursuits, prepared without repining to relinquish whatever Providence may demand, and suffer whatever it may inflict; in a word, in proportion to the degree in which you abandon all right in yourself, will you be qualified for the work of an evangelist. Purged from earthly concretions, and worldly passions, you will become *a vessel of honour fitted for the Master's use.* He who is not possessed of a considerable portion of a self-denying spirit, which was eminently the spirit of him *who pleased not himself,* can engage in no employment more irksome and intolerable than that of a Missionary; for what pleasure can he expect, what advantage can he hope to reap, independent of the consciousness or the hope of doing good? By the nature of your undertaking, all the avenues to secular reputation and emolument are shut against you; on the brilliant illusions with which the children of this world are enchanted, you have closed your eyes, and nothing is left but the severe and sublime satisfaction of following in the steps of those apostles and prophets, who in the midst of the derision of the world, exhausted themselves in a series of efforts to enlighten and to save it. You have chosen, it is true, the better part; but it is a

part which you must not hope to sustain but by the perfect subjection and mortification of every rival passion. You must be content to derive your satisfaction from yourself, or rather from your consciousness of the Divine approbation, since you will meet with few disposed to sympathize in your sorrows, or rejoice in your success.

The next qualification necessary for a teacher of christianity among heathens, is the *spirit of faith*, by which I intend, not merely that cordial belief of the truth which is essential to a christian, but that unshaken persuasion of the promises of God respecting the triumph and enlargement of his kingdom, which is sufficient to denominate its possessor *strong in faith*. It is impossible that the mind of a Missionary should be too much impressed with the beauty, glory, and grandeur of the kingdom of Christ, as it is unfolded in the oracles of the Old and New Testament; or with the certainty of the final accomplishment of those oracles, founded on the faithfulness and omnipotence of their Author. To those parts of scripture his attention should be especially directed, in which the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts, so to speak, the whole force and splendour of inspiration in depicting the future reign of the Messiah, together with that astonishing spectacle of dignity, purity, and peace which his church will exhibit, when, *having the glory of God*, her bounds shall be commensurate with those of the habitable globe; when every object on which the eye shall rest, will remind the spectator of the

commencement of a new age, in which the tabernacle of God is with men, and he dwells amongst them. · His spirit should be imbued with that sweet and tender awe which such anticipations will infallibly produce, whence will spring a generous contempt of the world, and an ardour bordering on impatience to be employed, though in the humblest sphere, as the instrument of accelerating such a period. For compared to this destiny in reserve for the children of men, compared to this glory, invisible at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has hitherto shone upon the world, is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it, the shadow of death.

Independent of these assurances, the idea of converting pagan nations to the christian faith must appear chimerical. The attempt to persuade them to relinquish their ancient mode of thinking, corroborated by habit, by example, by interest, and to adopt a new system of opinions and feelings, and enter on a new course of life, will ever be deemed by the worldly-wise, impracticable and visionary. *Pass over the isles of Chittim and see,* said the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, *and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods?* For a nation to *change* their gods, is represented by the highest authority as an event almost unparalleled: and if it be so difficult to induce them

to change the *mode* of their idolatry, how much more to persuade them to abandon it altogether! Idolatry is not to be looked upon as a mere speculative error respecting the object of worship, of little or no practical efficacy. Its hold upon the mind of a fallen creature is most tenacious, its operation most extensive. It is a corrupt practical institution, involving a whole system of sentiments and manners which perfectly moulds and transforms its votaries. It modifies human nature, in every aspect under which it can be contemplated, being intimately blended and incorporated with all its perceptions of good and evil, with all its infirmities, passions, and fears. In a country like India, where it has been established for ages, its ramifications are so extended as to come into contact with every mode, and every incident of life. Scarce a day, or an hour, passes with an Hindoo, in which, by the abstinencies it enjoins, and the ceremonies it prescribes, he is not reminded of his religion. It meets him at every turn, presses like the atmosphere on all sides, and holds him by a thousand invisible chains. By incessantly admonishing him of something which he must do, or something which he must forbear, it becomes the strongest of his active habits; while the multiplicity of objects of worship, distinguished by an infinite variety in their character and exploits, is sufficient to fill the whole sphere of his imagination. In the indolent repose which his constitution and climate incline him to indulge, he

suffers his fancy to wander, without limit, amidst scenes of voluptuous enjoyment, or objects of terror and dismay; while, revolving the history of his gods, he conceives himself absorbed in holy contemplations. There is not a vicious passion he can be disposed to cherish, not a crime he can be tempted to commit, for which he may not find a sanction and an example in the legends of his gods. Though the system of polytheism established in India, considered in an argumentative light, is beneath contempt, being destitute of the least shadow of proof, as well as of all coherence in its principles; yet, viewed as an instrument of establishing a despotic empire over the mind, nothing, it must be acknowledged, was ever more artfully contrived; not to mention the distinction of castes which is obviously adapted to fix and perpetuate every other institution. That the true religion should degenerate into idolatry is easily to be accounted for from the known principles of human nature, because such deterioration is aided by its corruption, flatters its strongest propensities, and artfully adapts itself to whatever is feeble, sensitive, and voluptuous in the character of the species.

..... Facilis descensus Averni.

As it is easy to descend from an elevation which it is difficult to climb, to fall from the adoration of the Supreme Being to the worship of idols, demands no effort. Idolatry is strongly intrenched

in the corruptions, and fortified by the weakness, of human nature. Hence we find all nations have sunk into it in succession, frequently in opposition to the strongest remonstrances of inspired prophets; while we have no example in the history of the world, of a single city, family, or individual who has renounced it through the mere operation of unassisted reason: such is the fatal propensity of mankind to that enormity. It is the vail of the covering, cast over all flesh, which nothing but the effulgence of Revelation has pierced. The true religion satisfies and enlarges the reason, but militates against the inclinations of men. Resting on a few sublime truths, addressed to the understanding and conscience, affording few distinct images to the fancy, and no indulgence to the passions, it can only be planted and preserved by a continual efflux from its Divine Author, of whose spirituality and elevation it so largely partakes.

But however difficult it may be to prevail upon men to relinquish the practice of idolatry, the accomplishment of this is not the whole, perhaps not the most arduous part of your work, since you are too well acquainted with the genius of Christianity to permit yourself to rest satisfied with any external profession, which is destitute of the fruits of the Spirit. The change you wish to realize, and which you will alone contemplate with satisfaction, is the effectual conversion of the soul from sin to holiness, and from the world to God; and how

much the necessity of this increases the difficulty of propagating the gospel among heathens with success, is so obvious that I need not insist upon it at large. The valley of vision in Ezekiel, filled with bones which are very dry, is no exaggerated picture of the state of the heathen world; and what less than an Almighty power can clothe them with sinews, cover them with flesh, and breathe into them the breath of life?

Hence the absolute necessity of a vigorous faith in the promises of God, respecting the future renovation of mankind, which will support you amidst the greatest discouragements, prompt you to hope against hope, and inspire you with unshaken perseverance and resolution; besides that, on account of the glory it gives to God, it imparts by divine appointment to its possessor, an interest in his all-sufficiency and power. It is a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects which connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God. *Be it unto thee*, said our Lord on a certain occasion, *be it unto thee according to thy faith.* Faith, considered as a mere speculative assent to the truth of a divine testimony, may be looked upon as uniform or stationary; but when we consider it as a practical principle, as one of the graces of the Spirit, we perceive it to be, in common with others, susceptible of continual enlargement and increase. In the degree of power which future and invisible realities exert over the mind, in the practical energy of what men profess

to believe, in the promptitude and certainty with which it determines them to a correspondent conduct, there is the utmost diversity even among those who believe with the heart. The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an unintercepted converse with its object, and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as on the contrary it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience, or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. This is the shield which will cover you from every assault; the chief part of that defensive armour which it behoves you to put on. Reposing on the word of Him with whom all things are possible, of Him who cannot lie; in the formidable bulwarks of idolatry, in the invincible rampart of prejudice and superstition, which the great adversary of mankind has cast up to obstruct the progress of truth, you will see nothing to appal you: you will feel the battle not to be yours, but the Lord's, who, determined to subdue his enemies under his feet, condescends to employ you as an humble instrument of his victories; and instead of sinking under the consciousness of weakness, you will glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Allow me to remind you of the absolute necessity of cultivating a mild, conciliating, affectionate temper, in the discharge of your office. If an uninterested spectator, after a careful perusal of the New Testament, were asked what he conceived to be its distinguishing characteristic, he would reply, without hesitation, that wonderful spirit of philanthropy by which it is distinguished. It is a perpetual commentary on that sublime aphorism, *God is love.* As the christian religion is an exhibition of the incomprehensible mercy of God to a guilty race, so it is dispensed in a manner perfectly congenial with its nature; and the book which contains it is replete with such unaffected strokes of tenderness and goodness, as are to be found in no other volume. The benign spirit of the gospel infused itself into the breast of its first Missionaries. In St. Paul, for example, we behold the most heroic resolution, the most lofty superiority to all the modes of intimidation and danger, a spirit which rose with its difficulties, and exulted in the midst of the most dismaying objects; yet when we look more narrowly into his character, and investigate his motives, we perceive it was his attachment to mankind that inspired him with this intrepidity, and urged him to conflicts more painful and arduous than the votaries of glory have ever sustained. Who would have supposed it possible for the same breast to be the seat of so much energy and so much softness? that he who changed the face of the world by his preaching, and while a

prisoner made his judge tremble on the tribunal, could stoop to embrace a fugitive slave, and to employ the most exquisite address to effect his reconciliation with his master? The conversion of Onesimus afforded him a joy *like the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* When the spiritual interests of mankind were concerned, no difficulties so formidable as to shake his resolution, no details so insignificant as to escape his notice. To the utmost inflexibility of principle, he joined the gentlest condescension to human infirmity, *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some: to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, to them that were without law, as without law,* adapting on all occasions his modes of address to the character and disposition of those with whom he conversed. It was the love of Christ and of souls that produced and harmonized those apparent discordances.

Such is the example you must propose for your imitation, if you would realize to any considerable extent the object of your mission to the heathen. By a mild and unassuming deportment, by an attention to their worldly, as well as to their spiritual, interests; by adopting, as far as you have ability, whatever may contribute to their happiness and improvement, convince them that you are the friend of man. When you have established yourself in their affections, you have gained an important point; you have possessed yourself of a signal advantage for the successful prosecution of your work.

Your business is to persuade men, and how can you expect to succeed unless you conciliate their regard? which is more necessary on account of the seeming severity which attaches to some part of the doctrine of Christ. Were you permitted to inculcate a self-pleasing doctrine, the want of suavity and gentleness of manner might easily be dispensed with; the laxity of the precept would compensate for the austerity of the teacher. But when you are called to insist on the state of man as a fallen and guilty creature, to enforce the necessity of self-denial, to impose the most powerful restraints on the indulgence of criminal passions; when you must denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, great mildness and affection are requisite to prevent such representations from exciting disgust. What is awful and alarming in christianity, should be softened and tempered by a persuasive tenderness of address. Let it be your care to divest religion of whatever is unlovely and repulsive, that it may appear not only pure, but gentle; not only majestic, but amiable; equally favourable to the enjoyment and the communication of happiness. But I have dwelt longer on this head than was necessary, when I recollect that the person I am addressing is distinguished by a temper which will render the mild condescensions I am recommending not more his duty than his delight.

The affectionate and conciliatory disposition we have been enforcing must be combined with

prudence, and the diligent study of human nature, which you will find absolutely necessary to conduct you through intricate and unbeaten paths. St. Paul frequently reminds the Thessalonians of the *manner of his entrance* amongst them. In the first introduction of the gospel amongst a people, it is of great importance that every step be well weighed, that nothing be done which is rash, offensive, or indecorous; but every precaution employed, consistent with godly simplicity, to disarm prejudice, and conciliate respect: nor is there any thing in the conduct of the first ministers of the gospel more to be admired than the exquisite propriety with which they conducted themselves in the most delicate situations. Their zeal was exempt from indecorum, their caution from timidity or art. In the commencement of every great and hazardous undertaking the first measures are usually decisive, at least in those instances in which success is dependent, under God, on the voluntary cooperation of mankind. A single act of imprudence is sufficient to blast the undertaking of a Missionary, which, in the situation of an ordinary minister, would scarcely be felt. The best method of securing yourself from errors in this quarter, is to endeavour to acquire as large a measure as possible of the graces of the Spirit, to be deeply imbued with the wisdom which is from above. Nothing subtle or refined should enter into the views of a christian Missionary. Let him be continually elevating his principles, and

purifying his motives; let him be clothed with humility, and actuated on all occasions with love to God and the souls of men, and his character cannot fail of being marked with a propriety and beauty which will ultimately command universal esteem. These were the only arts which a Schwartz in the east, and a Brainerd in the west, condescended to cultivate.

It must be remembered, however, that the functions of a Missionary connect him more with mankind than ordinary ministers, and less admit of an entire abstraction from the world; on which account he will sometimes be exposed to difficulties from which nothing can extricate him but a considerable acquaintance with men and things. He will probably be called to transact affairs of considerable moment with persons in superior stations, with men of dissimilar characters and habits, of different nations and religions, who possess nothing in common but the epidemic selfishness of human nature; in an intercourse with whom, he will need the wisdom of the serpent, combined with the innocence of the dove. The prudence, however, which it is desirable a missionary should possess, is not a timid, calculating policy; it is manly and heroic, operating with promptitude and vigour on an extensive fund of knowledge, acquired by habits of acute and vigilant observation. Of many functions of life it is possible to foresee the duties they comprise, and to ascertain beforehand the extent of their demand on our time and talents. In the

office of a Missionary it is impossible. His engagements must be in a great degree fortuitous, arising out of circumstances which he could neither foresee nor control; and hence, unless he possess a prompt and enlightened judgement, he will often feel himself embarrassed and perplexed.

There is much in the situation of a Missionary calculated to keep him awake and attentive to his duties. To a stated pastor, it is confessed, there are not wanting powerful motives to diligence and exertion, at the same time that it is equally obvious there are considerable temptations to indolence and formality. Since the services he is engaged to perform admit of little variety, and are easily reducible to a system, they are in no small danger of being performed rather from the mechanism of habit than the impulse of feeling; and much ardour of mind is requisite to infuse freshness and novelty into a series of operations so uniform. In the performance of duties which proceed in a settled routine, it is equally difficult to feel and to impart an interest. With the Missionary it is quite the reverse. Incapable, as he is, of forming a conception of the situation in which he may be placed, or of the difficulties with which he may be surrounded, he must be conscious his undertaking involves a character of enterprise and hazard. He is required to explore new paths, and, leaving the footsteps of the flock, to go in quest of the lost sheep, on whatever mountain it may have wandered, or in whatever valley it may be hid. He

must be prepared to encounter prejudice and error in strange and unwonted shapes, to trace the aberrations of reason, and the deviations from rectitude, through all the diversified mazes of superstition and idolatry. He is engaged in a series of offensive operations; he is in the field of battle, wielding *weapons which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of Satan.* When not in action, he is yet encamped in an enemy's country, where nothing can secure his acquisitions, or preserve him from surprise, but incessant vigilance. The voluntary exile from his native country to which he submits, is sufficient to remind him continually of his important embassy, and to induce a solicitude that so many sacrifices may not be made, so many privations undergone, in vain. He holds the lamp of instruction to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; and while there remains a particle of ignorance not expelled, a single prejudice not vanquished, a sinful or idolatrous custom not relinquished, his task is left unfinished. It is not enough for him, on a stated day, to address an audience on the concerns of eternity: he must teach from house to house, and be instant in season and out of season, embracing every opportunity which offers of inculcating the principles of a new religion, as well as of *confirming the souls of his disciples.* He must consider himself as the mouth, and interpreter of that wisdom, *which crieth without, which uttereth her voice in the streets, which crieth in the chief places of concourse.*

Under these impressions, you will peruse the Acts of the Apostles, which record the methods by which the gospel was first propagated, with deep attention, where you will trace precedents the most instructive, as well as difficulties surmounted and trials endured, exactly similar to your own; nor will you fail to feel a sympathy of spirit with those holy men in their labours and sufferings, which other ministers can but very imperfectly possess. Encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, you will esteem it no inconsiderable honour to share in the same combat, encounter the same enemies, and accomplish the share allotted you of those sufferings which remain to Christ's mystical body. I scarcely need recommend to your attention the letters of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, where the office of an evangelist (for such you must consider yourself) is delineated with such precision and fidelity. While you peruse his inspired directions, you are entitled to consider yourself as addressed, inasmuch as the Spirit under whose direction they were written, unquestionably intended them for the instruction of all who are in similar circumstances.

In directing your view to apostolical precedents, attend not so much to their *letter* as to their *spirit*: investigate carefully the circumstances in which they were placed; compare them with your own with respect to the particulars in which they coincide, and in which they differ, that you may follow them not as a servile copyist, but as a judicious and enlightened imitator.

Be *strong* in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus. Among the nations which will be the scene of your future labours, you will witness a state of things essentially different from that which prevails here, where the name of Christ is held in reverence, the principal doctrines of his religion speculatively acknowledged, and the institutes of worship widely extended and diffused. The leaven of christian piety has spread itself in innumerable directions, modified public opinion, improved the state of society, and given birth to many admirable institutions unknown to pagan countries. The authority of the Saviour is recognised, his injunctions in some instances obeyed, and the outrages of impiety restrained by law, by custom, and above all, by the silent counteraction of piety in its sincere professors. Hence, in combating the vices and irreligion of the age, so many principles are conceded, and so much ground already won from the adversary, that little remains but to urge him with the legitimate consequences of his own opinions, and to rouse the dormant energies of conscience by the exhibition of acknowledged truth. Ministers of the gospel in this quarter of the globe resemble the commanders of an army stationed in a conquered country, whose inhabitants, overawed and subdued, yield a partial obedience; they have sufficient employment in attempting to conciliate the affections of the natives, and in carrying into execution the orders and regulations of their Prince; since there is much latent disaffection, though no open

rebellion, a strong partiality to their former rulers, with few attempts to erect the standard of revolt.

In India, Satan maintains an almost undisputed empire, and the powers of darkness, secure of their dominion, riot and revel at their pleasure, sporting themselves with the misery of their vassals, whom they incessantly agitate with delusive hopes and fantastic terrors, leading them captive at their will, while few efforts have been made to despoil them of their usurped authority. Partial invasions have been attempted, and a few captives disenthralled; but the strength and sinews of empire remain entire, and that dense and palpable darkness which invests it, has scarcely felt the impression of a few feeble and scattered rays. In India you will witness the predominance of a system which provides for the worship of gods many, and of lords many, while it excludes the adoration of the Supreme Being, legitimates cruelty, polygamy, and lust, debases the standard of morals, oppresses with ceremonies those whom it deprives of instruction, and suggests no solid hope of happiness beyond the grave.

You will witness with indignation that monstrous alliance betwixt impurity and devotion, obscenity and religion, which characterises the popular idolatry of all nations, and which, in opposition to the palliating sophistry of infidels, sufficiently evinces it to be what the Scriptures assert—the worship of devils, not of God.

When we consider that moral causes operate on free agents, we shall not be surprised to find their effects are less uniform than those which result from the action of material and physical powers, and that human minds are susceptible of opposite impressions from the same objects.

On such as have neither been established in the evidences, nor felt the efficacy, of revealed religion, a residence in a pagan country has usually a most pernicious effect, and matures latent irreligion into open impiety. The absence of christian institutions and christian examples leaves them at liberty to gratify their sensual inclinations without control, and the familiar contemplation of pagan manners and customs gradually wears out every trace and vestige of the religion in which they were educated, and imboldens them to consider it in the light of a local superstition. They are no further converts to the brahminical faith than to prefer it to their own; that is, they prefer the religion they can despise with impunity, to one that afflicts their consciences, that which leaves them free, to that which restrains them. As the secret language of their heart had always been, *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from amongst us,* in the absence of God, of his institutes and his worship, they find a congenial element, nor are they at all displeased at perceiving the void filled with innumerable fantastic shapes and chimeras; for they contemplate religion with great composure, providing it be sufficiently ridiculous.

You, I am persuaded, will view the condition of millions who are involved in the shades of idolatry, originally formed in the image of God, now totally estranged from their great Parent, and reposing their trust on things which cannot profit, with different emotions, and will be anxious to recall them to the Bishop and Shepherd of their souls. Instead of considering the most detestable species of idolatry as so many different modes of worshipping the One Supreme, agreeable to the jargon of infidels, you will not hesitate to regard them as an impious attempt to share his incommunicable honours; as composing that image of jealousy which he is engaged to smite, confound, and destroy. When you compare the incoherence, extravagance, and absurdity which pervade the systems of polytheism, with the simple and sublime truths of the gospel, the result will be an increased attachment to that mystery of godliness. When you observe the anxiety of the Hindoo devotee to obtain the pardon of sin, and the incredible labours and sufferings which he cheerfully undergoes to quiet the perturbations of conscience, the doctrine of the cross will rise, if possible, still higher in your esteem, and you will long for an opportunity of crying in his ears, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.* When you witness the immolation of females on the funeral pile of their husbands, and the barbarous treatment of aged parents left by their children to perish on the banks of the Ganges, you

will recognise the footsteps of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and will be impatient to communicate the mild and benevolent maxims of the gospel. When you behold an immense population held in chains by that detestable institution the *caste*, as well as bowed down under an intolerable weight of brahminical superstitions, you will long to impart the liberty which Christ confers, *where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

The cultivation of a wilderness, however, requires a more robust and vigorous industry than is necessary to preserve in a good condition the ground which is already reclaimed. The noxious produce of a long tract of time must be extirpated, the stubborn and intractable soil broken up, marshes drained, irregularities levelled, and much persevering labour employed, ere the ordinary operations of agriculture can commence, or the seed be cast into the earth. In attempting to evangelize the inhabitants of pagan countries, you must expect to encounter peculiar difficulties: you will meet in the natives with the ignorance and mental imbecility of children, without the candour, simplicity, and freedom from prejudice which are among the charms of that tender age. To efface erroneous impressions, to eradicate false principles, and reduce them even to a natural state, defective and corrupt as that state is, will be no inconsiderable task, since there is not only an immense void to be

filled, and great deficiencies to be supplied, but principles and prejudices to contend with, capable of the most active resistance.

In recommending the principles of christianity to a pagan nation, I would by no means advise the adoption of a refined and circuitous course of instruction, commencing with an argumentative exposition of the principles of natural religion, and from thence advancing to the peculiar doctrines of revelation; nor would I advise you to devote much time to an elaborate confutation of the Hindoo or Mahometan systems. The former of these methods would be far too subtle and intricate for popular use; the latter calculated to irritate. Great practical effects on the populace are never produced by profound argumentation; and every thing which tends to irritation and disgust should be carefully avoided. Let your instruction be in the form of a *testimony*: let it, with respect to the mode of exhibiting it, though not to the spirit of the teacher, be *dogmatic*. *Testify* repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It might become a Socrates, who was left to the light of nature, to express himself with diffidence, and to affirm that he had spared no pains in acting up to the character of a philosopher, in other words, a diligent inquirer after truth; but whether he had philosophized aright, or attained the object of his inquiries, he knew not, but left it to be ascertained in that world on which he was entering. In him, such indications of modest

distrust were graceful and affecting; but would little become the disciple of revelation, or the christian minister, who is entitled to say with St. John, *we* know *that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.*

After reminding them of their state as guilty and polluted creatures, which the ceremonies of their religion teach them to confess, exhibit to the inhabitants of Hindostan the cross of Christ as their only refuge. Acquaint them with his incarnation, his character as the Son of God and the Son of man, his offices, and the design of his appearance; not with the air of a disputer of this world, but of him who is conscious to himself of his possessing the medicine of life, the treasure of immortality, which he is anxious to impart to guilty men. Insist fearlessly on the futility and vanity of all human methods of expiation, on the impotence of idols, and the command of God to *all men every where to repent, inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* Display the sufferings of Christ like one who was an eye witness of those sufferings, and hold up the blood, the precious blood of atonement, as issuing warm from the cross. It is a peculiar excellence of the gospel, that in its wonderful adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, as fallen creatures, it bears intrinsic marks of its divinity, and is supported not less by internal than by

external evidence. By a powerful appeal to the conscience, by a faithful delineation of man in his grandeur, and in his weakness, in his original capacity for happiness, and his present misery and guilt, present this branch of its evidence in all its force. Seize on every occasion those features of christianity which render it interesting; and by awakening the fears, and exciting the hopes, of your hearers, endeavour to annihilate every other object, and make it appear what it really is, the pearl of great price, the sovereign balm, the cure of every ill, the antidote of death, the precursor of immortality. In such a ministry, fear not to give loose to all the ardour of your soul, to call into action every emotion and every faculty which can exalt or adorn it. You will find ample scope for all its force and tenderness; and should you be called to pour your life as a libation on the offering of the Gentiles, you will only have the more occasion to exult and rejoice.

In order to qualify yourself for the performance of these duties, it is above all things necessary for you to acquaint yourself with the general doctrines of christianity in their full extent; but it will be neither necessary nor expedient to initiate your converts into those controversies which, through a long course of time, have grown up amongst christians. Endeavour to acquire as extensive and perfect a knowledge as possible of the dictates of inspiration, and by establishing your hearers in these, preclude the entrance of error, rather than

confute it. 'Be always prepared to answer every modest inquiry into the grounds of your faith and practice; and that you may be more capable of entering into their difficulties, and anticipating their objections, place yourself as much as possible in the situation of those whom you are called to instruct. When we consider the permanent consequences likely to result from first impressions on the minds of pagans, the few advantages they possess for religious discussion, and the extreme confidence they are likely to repose in their spiritual guides, you must be conscious how important it is to *plant wholly a right seed.* 'Your defective representations of truth will not soon be supplied, nor the errors you plant extirpated, since we find societies of christians in these parts of the world, where discussion and controversy abound, retain from generation to generation the distinguishing tenets of their leaders. In forming the plan, and laying the foundation of an edifice which it is proposed shall last for ever, it is desirable that no materials should be admitted but such as are solid and durable, and no ornaments introduced but such as are chaste and noble. As it would be too much to expect you should perfectly succeed in imparting the mind of Christ, might I be permitted to advise, you will lean rather to the side of *defect* than *excess*, and in points of inferior magnitude omit what is true, rather than inculcate what is doubtful; since the influence of religion on the heart depends not on the multiplicity, but on the quality of its objects.

The unnecessary multiplication of articles of faith gives a character of littleness to christianity, and tends in no small degree to impress a similar character on its professors. The grandeur and efficacy of the gospel results not from an immense accumulation of little things, but from its powerful exhibition of a few great ones. If you are determined to initiate your hearers into the subtleties and disputes which have prevailed in the Western world, I would recommend you, in imitation of the church of Rome, to dispense with the New Testament as the basis of instruction, and to betake yourself to the writings of the schoolmen; for that divine volume, rightly interpreted, supplies no aliment to a disputatious humour, which has never ceased, since it was first introduced, to be the scoff of infidels, and the plague of the church.

Among the indirect benefits which may be expected to arise from missions, we may be allowed to anticipate a more pure, simple, apostolical mode of presenting the gospel, which it may be doubted whether any of the various denominations, under which the followers of Christ have been classed, have exhibited precisely as he and his apostles taught it. In consequence of the collision of disputes, and the hostile aspect which rival sects bear to each other, they are scarcely in a situation to investigate truth with perfect impartiality. Few or none of them have derived their sentiments purely from the sacred oracles, as the result of independent inquiry; but almost universally from some

distinguished leader, who at the commencement of the Reformation formed his faith, and planned his discipline, amidst the heat and fury of theological combat. Terms have been invited for the purpose of excluding error, or more accurately defining the truth, to which the New Testament is a stranger, and on those terms associations and impressions ingrafted, which in some instances, perhaps, little correspond with the divine simplicity of the gospel. It is far from my intention to insinuate that serious and fundamental errors may justly be imputed to the classes of christians to whom I refer ; I am fully convinced of the contrary :—but it may be worth while to inquire whether we have not all in our turn receded somewhat from the standard, if not by the adoption of positive error, yet by a disproportionate attention to some parts of revelation, to the neglect of others equally important, in consequence of an undue partiality to our respective peculiarities.

The situation of a Missionary retired from the scene of debate and controversy, who has continually before his eyes the objects which presented themselves to the attention of the apostles, is favourable to an emancipation from prejudice of every sort, and to the acquisition of just and enlarged conceptions of christianity. It will be your lot to walk the same wards in this great hospital, and to prescribe to the same class of patients that first experienced the salutary and renovating power of the gospel. The gods which

are worshipped at this time in India are supposed by Sir William Jones to be the very same, under different names, with those who shared the adoration of Italy and Greece when the gospel was first published in those regions; so that you will be an eye-witness of the very evils and enormities which then prevailed in the Western hemisphere, and which the sword of the Spirit so effectually subdued. You will be under great advantages for ascending to first principles; for tracing the stream to its head and spring, by having incessantly to contemplate that state of things in a moral view, of which every page of scripture assumes the existence, but of which the inhabitants of Europe have no living experience. It is with great satisfaction accordingly I have observed the harmony of doctrine, the identity of instruction, which has pervaded the ministry of protestant missionaries, who have been employed under the auspices of different denominations of christians.

If to survey mankind in different situations, and under the influence of opposite institutions, civil and religious, tends to elevate the mind above vulgar prejudice, by none is this advantage more eminently possessed than by christian missionaries. In addition to the advantages usually anticipated from foreign travel, their attention is directly turned to man in the most interesting light in which he can be viewed. An intelligent missionary, in consequence of daily conversing with the natives on the most momentous subjects, and at the most

affecting moments, has opportunities of becoming acquainted, not merely with the surface of manners, but with the interior of the character, which can rarely fall to the lot of any other person; besides, that christianity, it may be justly affirmed, is the best decipherer of the human heart, and is that alone which can solve its contradictions and explain its anomalies. Hence it may be fairly expected, nor will the expectation disappoint us, that an experienced Missionary, possessed of the talent and habit of observation, will, in every country, deserve to be classed amongst the most enlightened of its inhabitants.

Few things more powerfully tend to enlarge the mind than conversing with great objects, and engaging in great pursuits. That the object you are pursuing is entitled to that appellation, will not be questioned by him who reflects on the infinite advantages derived from christianity, to every nation and clime where it has prevailed in its purity, and that the prodigious superiority which Europe possesses over Asia and Africa, is chiefly to be ascribed to this cause. It is the possession of a religion which comprehends the seeds of endless improvement, which maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is barbarous, selfish, or inhuman, which, by unveiling futurity, clothes morality with the sanction of a divine law, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every combination of events, and in every stage of existence; a religion which, by affording the most

just and sublime conceptions of the Deity, and of the moral relations of man, has given birth at once to the loftiest speculation, and the most child-like humility, uniting the inhabitants of the globe into one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation; it is this religion which, rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished Europe with talents, virtues, and exploits, which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a paradise, the delight and wonder of the world. An attempt to propagate this religion among the natives of Hindostan, may perhaps be stigmatized as visionary and romantic; but to enter the lists of controversy with those who would deny it to be great and noble, would be a degradation to reason.*

* It is impossible to read the strictures of the Edinburgh Review on Missions, in an article which appeared under that title, without surprise and indignation, that such sentiments could find admission in a work which possesses such just claims to literary merit. The anonymous writer of the article alluded to, with the levity of a buffoon, joined to a heart of iron, and a face of brass, has more than insinuated that the christianity attempted to be promoted in India by the Missionaries at Serampore, would, were it adopted, prove a serious injury to the natives, and that they are much happier and more virtuous under their present institutions. The system of religion, be it remembered, which these men have attempted to introduce, and which this *christian* reviewer loads with abuse, is precisely the same in its doctrinal articles with that of the Church of England, to which he has subscribed, *ex animo* no doubt, his unfeigned assent and consent. It may be hoped, that at a time when the Church of England is evincing a spirit of moderation and forbearance, and can boast of so many prelates and dignitaries, distinguished for their piety and learning, no

On these principles the cause of missions has recently been sustained in parliament, and the propriety and expedience of attempting the propagation of christianity in India, demonstrated by arguments and considerations suited to the meridian of such assemblies. We feel ourselves highly indebted to those distinguished senators who exerted their eloquence on that occasion, and have no hesitation in asserting that a more wise and magnanimous measure was never adopted by an enlightened legislature, than that of facilitating the communication of christian knowledge to the subjects of our Eastern empire. As a political measure, nothing more unexceptionable or beneficial can be conceived. It is not in this light, however, we would wish you to regard your present undertaking. What may satisfy the views of a statesman, ought not to satisfy a christian

clergyman for the future will be allowed to degrade himself in a similar manner, without the most indignant rebuke. It may possibly gratify certain spirits to see the dissenters and methodists vilified and abused; but they will do well to remember, that the indulgence of a profane and scoffing humour must be ultimately injurious not only to christianity, but to any christian community whatever; and that to stab religion through the sides of fanaticism, is a stale artifice of infidels, by which the simplest can no longer be deceived. I sincerely hope the conductors of the Edinburgh Review have long been ashamed of the article in question. When I compare the intellectual power displayed in some articles of that publication with the extreme ignorance of religion evinced in others, I know not how better to characterise it than in the language of Virgil, speaking of Polyphemus,—

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, *cui lumen ademptum.*"

minister. It is the business of the former to project for this world; of the latter for eternity. The former proposes to improve the advantages, and to mitigate the evils of life; the latter, the conquest of death, and the achievement of immortality. They proceed in the same direction, it is true, as far as they go; but the one proceeds infinitely further than the other.

In the views of the most enlightened statesmen, compared to those of a christian minister, there is a littleness and limitation, which is not to be imputed in one case as a moral imperfection, nor in the other as a personal merit; the difference arising purely from the disparity in the subjects upon which they respectively speculate. Should you be asked on your arrival in India, as it is very probable you will, what there is in christianity which renders it so inestimable in your eyes, that you judged it fit to undertake so long, dangerous, and expensive a voyage, for the purpose of imparting it,—you will answer without hesitation, it is the power of God to salvation; nor will any view of it short of this, or the inculcation of it for any inferior purpose, enable it to produce even those moralizing and civilizing effects it is so powerfully adapted to accomplish. Christianity will civilize, it is true, but it is only when it is allowed to develope the energies by which it sanctifies. Christianity will inconceivably ameliorate the present condition of being,—who doubts it? Its universal prevalence, not in the name but in reality, will

convert this world into a semi-paradisaical state; but it is only while it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. Let her be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny, to forget that *she came from God, and returns to God;* and whether she is employed by the artful and enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire and dominion over mankind, or by the philanthropist, as the means of promoting their civilization and improvement, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings, and takes her flight, leaving nothing but a base and sanctimonious hypocrisy in her room.

Preach it then, my dear brother, with a constant recollection that such is its character and aim. Preach it with a perpetual view to eternity, and with the simplicity and affection with which you would address your dearest friends, were they assembled round your dying bed. While others are ambitious to form the citizen of earth, be it yours to train him for heaven; to raise up the temple of God from among the ancient desolations; to contribute your part towards the formation and perfection of that eternal society, which will flourish in inviolable purity and order, when all human associations shall be dissolved, and the princes of this world shall come to nought. In the pursuit of these objects, let it be your ambition to tread in the footsteps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz; I may add, of your excellent relative, with whom we are happy in perceiving you to

possess a congeniality of character, not less than an affinity of blood.

But should you succeed beyond your utmost hope, expect not to escape the ridicule of the ungodly, or the censure of the world: but be content to sustain that sort of reputation, and run that sort of career, invariably allotted to the christian Missionary; where, agreeable to the experience of St. Paul, obscurity and notoriety, admiration and scorn, sorrows and consolations, attachments the most tender and opposition the most violent, are interchangeably mingled.

But whatever be the sentiments of the world, respecting which you will indulge no excessive solicitude, your name will be precious in India, your memory dear to multitudes, who will reverence in you the instrument of their eternal salvation; and how much more satisfaction will accrue from the consciousness of this, than from the loudest human applause, your own reflections will determine. At that awful moment when you are called to bid a final adieu to the world, and to look into eternity; when the hopes, fears, and agitations which sublunary objects shall have occasioned, will subside like a feverish dream, or a vision of the night, the certainty of belonging to the number of the saved will be the only consolation; and when to this is joined the conviction of having contributed to enlarge that number, your joy will be full. You will be conscious of having conferred a benefit on your fellow-creatures, you

know not precisely what, but of such a nature that it will require all the illumination of eternity to measure its dimensions, and ascertain its value. Having followed Christ in the *regeneration*, in the preparatory labours accompanying the renovation of mankind, you will rise to an elevated station in a world where the scantiest portion is a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, and a conspicuous place will be assigned you in that unchanging firmament, where those who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But it is time I should close this address, which has already been extended much further than was at first designed. On the necessity of maintaining an exemplary purity of conduct, little or nothing has been said, because such is our confidence in your character, that we deemed admonition of this kind superfluous. As you are, however, still in the body, and will be exposed to numerous temptations, you will feel the propriety of being jealous over yourself with a godly jealousy, and exerting a continual care and vigilance, lest, in the awful language of the apostle, *after preaching to others, you yourself should be a cast-away.* I need not remind you that the society under whose auspices you are proceeding to India, have on no occasion employed a Missionary in whom they reposed more confidence, or of whom they formed more raised expectations; if you should become vain, worldly, sensual, indolent, and consequently

useless, ours will not be an ordinary disappointment; we shall have fallen from a great hope. You will be sensible of the indispensable necessity of not interfering with the politics of India, nor of giving the smallest ground of umbrage and distrust to the constituted authorities, to whom it will be your duty not less than your interest to pay on all occasions, in return for the protection they will yield, the most respectful deference.

Let me also recommend you to listen to the advice, and be guided by the suggestions, as far as your conscience will permit, of your fathers in the mission, and of Dr. Carey in particular, whose wisdom and experience, to say nothing of his relationship to you, entitle him to reverential attention. You are now about to be removed from us, who it is probable shall see your face no more; but you will not be removed from the communion of saints, which no seas can divide, no distance impair, in which we shall often meet at a throne of grace, whence fervent prayers will ascend to the Father of mercies, that he may keep you under his holy protection, and cause the richest of his blessings to descend *on the head of him who was separate from his brethren.*

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY

THE DEATH OF HER LATE ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES,

PREACHED AT

HERVEY LANE, LEICESTER,

NOVEMBER 16, 1817.

[PRINTED FROM THE SEVENTEENTH EDITION.]

A SERMON.

JEREMIAH XV. 9.

She hath given up the ghost: her sun is gone down while it was yet day.

IT has been the approved practice of the most enlightened teachers of religion to watch for favourable occasions to impress the mind with the lessons of wisdom and piety; with a view to which they have been wont to advert to recent events of an interesting order, that, by striking in with a train of reflection already commenced, they might the more easily and forcibly insinuate the instruction it was their wish to convey. A sound discretion, it must be acknowledged, is requisite to make the selection. To descend to the details and occurrences of private life, would seldom consist with the dignified decorum suited to religious assemblies: the events to which the attention is directed on such occasions should be of a nature somewhat extraordinary, and calculated to produce a deep and permanent impression. Admonition, imparted under such circumstances, is styled, in scripture, a word in season, or, as

it is emphatically expressed in the original, *a word on the wheels,* denoting the peculiar facility with which it makes its way to the heart.

In such a situation, the greatest difficulty a speaker has to surmount is already obviated; attention is awake, an interest is excited, and all that remains is to lead the mind, already sufficiently susceptible, to objects of permanent utility. He originates nothing; it is not so much he that speaks, as the events which speak for themselves; he only presumes to interpret their language, and to guide the confused emotions of a sorrowful and swollen heart into the channels of piety.

You are aware, my brethren, how strongly these observations apply to that most affecting occurrence which has recently spread such consternation through this great empire; an event which combines so many circumstances adapted to excite commiseration and concern, that not to survey it with attention, not to permit it to settle on the heart, would betray the utmost insensibility.

Devout attention to the dealings of Providence is equally consonant to the dictates of reason and of scripture. He who believes in the superintendence of an eternal mind over the affairs of the universe, is equally irrational and indevout in neglecting to make the course of events the subject of frequent meditation; since the knowledge of God is incomparably more important than the most intimate acquaintance with our

fellow-creatures; and as the latter is chiefly acquired by an attentive observation of their conduct, so must the former be obtained in the same way. The operations of Providence are marked with a character as expressive of their great Author as the productions of human agency; and the same Being who speaks like himself in his word, acts like himself in the moral economy of the universe.

However inferior in precision and extent the knowledge derived from the last of these sources, compared to the copious and satisfactory information afforded by the Scriptures, it will appear too important to be neglected, when it is considered that it is *antecedent*, and that, supposing it is not sufficient of itself to evince the existence of a Deity, it is impossible for revelation to supply that defect. The word of God assumes the certainty of his being and attributes, as a truth already sufficiently ascertained by the light of nature, while it proceeds to inform us on a multitude of subjects which elude the researches of finite reason. To us who have access to both these sources of information, they serve to illustrate each other: the obscurities of providence are elucidated by scripture; the declarations of scripture are verified by providence. One unfolds, as far as it is suitable to our state, the character and designs of the mysterious Agent; the other displays his works; and the admirable harmony, which is found to subsist between them, strengthens and invigorates our confidence in both.

Hence, a disregard to the operations of the Deity in his providential dispensations, is frequently stigmatized in scripture as an unequivocal symptom of impiety. *Woe unto them,* says Isaiah, *that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! and the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge."**

The striking analogy which the course of nature and providence bears to the peculiar discoveries of revelation, has been traced by an eminent prelate with a depth and precision which reflect honour on human nature.† It is not my intention to enter on this topic: let me only be permitted to remark, that the analogy extends not only to the discoveries themselves, but to the manner in which they are conveyed. In both, a constant appeal is made to facts. A large portion of the Bible is devoted to history, where the grand truths which are taught are intimately incorporated with the narrative, and mingled with the character and transactions of living agents; by which they are rendered far more impressive than if they had remained in an abstract and didactic form.

How languid the impression produced by a bare statement of the doctrine of a particular providence,

* Isaiah v. 11—13. † Bishop Butler.

for example, compared to that which we derive from the history of Abraham, whom we see conducted from kingdom to kingdom by a divine hand, and instructed where to pitch his tent, and where to erect his altars. The wonderful evolutions in the story of Joseph also illustrate the conduct of him whose *ways are in the deep, and his paths past finding out,* in a manner far more powerful than the clearest instruction conveyed in general propositions.

When the Almighty was pleased to introduce, by the advent of the Messiah, a more perfect and permanent economy of religion, he founded it entirely on facts, attested by the most unexceptionable evidence, and the most splendid miracles. The apostles were *witnesses,* who, by the signs and wonders they wrought, made that appeal to the senses of men, which had been previously made to their own; and the doctrines which they taught in their writings were little more than natural consequences resulting from the undoubted truth of their testimony. If they wish to inculcate the doctrine of a resurrection and future judgement, they deem it sufficient to appeal to the fact of Christ's resurrection and session at the right hand of God; they present no evidence of a future state, except what ultimately terminates in the person of the Saviour, as the first-begotten from the dead; and most anxiously warn us against resting our hope of salvation on any other basis than that of a sensible sacrifice, *the offering of*

the body of Christ once for all. Thus, whatever is sublime and consolatory in the christian religion originates in facts and events which appealed to the senses, and passed in this visible theatre; though their ultimate result is commensurate with eternity. In order to rescue us from the idolatry of the creature, and the dominion of the senses, He who is intimately acquainted with our frame makes use of sensible appearances, and causes his Son to become flesh, and to pitch his tent amongst us, that, by faith in his crucified humanity, we may ascend, as by a mystic ladder, to the abode of the Eternal.

Providence, it has already been remarked, conveys its most impressive lessons in the same shape; and by clothing the abstractions of religion in the realities of life, renders them in a manner palpable. While they remain in the form of general truths, and are the objects of speculation, they affect us but little; they preserve us from the shallow sophistry of impiety, and conduct us to just conclusions on subjects of the last moment; but their control over the heart and conduct is scarcely felt. In order to be deeply impressed, we require some object to be presented more in unison with the sensitive part of our nature—something more precise and limited—something which the mind may more distinctly realize, and the imagination more firmly grasp. The process of feeling widely differs in this respect from that of reasoning, and is regulated by opposite laws. In reasoning, we recede

as far as possible from sensible impressions; and the more general and comprehensive our conclusions, and the larger our abstractions, provided they are sustained by sufficient evidence, the more knowledge is extended, and the intellect improved. Sensibility is excited, the affections are awakened, on the contrary, on those occasions in which we tread back our steps, and, descending from generalities, direct the attention to individual objects and particular events. We all acknowledge, for example, our constant exposure to death; but it is seldom we experience the practical impression of that weighty truth, except when we witness the stroke of mortality actually inflicted. We universally acknowledge the uncertainty of human prospects, and the instability of earthly distinctions; but it is when we behold them signally destroyed and confounded, that we feel our presumption checked, and our hearts appalled.

For this reason, He who spake as never man spake, was wont to convey his instructions by sensible images, and in familiar apologues, that, by concentrating the attention within the sphere of particular occurrences, and individual objects, the impressions of his lessons might become more vivid and more profound.

It is thus that Providence is addressing us at the present moment: and if we are wise, we shall convert the melancholy event before us, not to the purposes of political speculation, fruitless conjecture, or anxious foreboding, but (what is infinitely

better) to a profound consideration of the hand of God; and then, though we may be at a loss to explore the reason of his conduct, we shall be at none how to improve it.

Criminal as it is always, not to mark the footsteps of Deity, the guilt of such neglect is greatly aggravated, when he comes forth from his place to execute his judgments, and display his wrath; when he is pleased, as at present, to extinguish in an instant the hopes of a nation, to clothe the throne in sackcloth, and involve a kingdom in mourning. The greatness, the suddenness of this calamity, accompanied with circumstances of the most tender and affecting interest, speaks to the heart in accents which nothing but the utmost obduration can resist; so that were it the sole intention of Him who has inflicted it, to awaken the careless, and alarm the secure, among the higher orders especially, we are at a loss to perceive what could have been done more than has been accomplished. Whatever imagination can combine in an example of the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, and the nothingness of worldly greatness, in its highest state of elevation, is exhibited in this awful event in its full dimensions.

The first particular which strikes the attention in this solemn visitation, is the rank of the illustrious personage, who appears to have been placed on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering her fall the more conspicuous, and of

convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction, that *man at his best estate is altogether vanity.* The Deity himself adorned the victim with his own hands, accumulating upon her all the decorations and ornaments best adapted to render her the object of universal admiration. He permitted her to touch whatever this sublunary scene presents that is most attractive and alluring, but to grasp nothing; and after conducting her to an eminence whence she could survey all the glories of empire as her destined possession, closed her eyes in death.

That such an event should affect us in a manner very superior to similar calamities which occur in private life, is agreeable to the order of nature, and the will of God; nor is the profound sensation it has produced to be considered as the symbol of courtly adulation. The catastrophe itself, it is true, apart from its peculiar circumstances, is not a rare occurrence. Mothers often expire in the ineffectual effort to give birth to their offspring; both are consigned to the same tomb, and the survivor, after witnessing the wreck of so many hopes and joys, is left to mourn alone, *refusing to be comforted, because they are not.* There is no sorrow which imagination can picture, no sign of anguish which nature agonized and oppressed can exhibit, no accent of woe, but what is already familiar to the ear of fallen, afflicted humanity; and the roll which Ezekiel beheld, flying through the heavens, inscribed within and without *with sorrow, lamentation, and woe,* enters, sooner or

later, into every house, and discharges its contents in every bosom. But in the private departments of life, the distressing incidents which occur are confined to a narrow circle. The hope of an individual is crushed, the happiness of a family is destroyed; but the social system is unimpaired, and its movements experience no impediment, and sustain no sensible injury. The arrow passes through the air, which soon closes upon it, and all is tranquil. But when the great lights and ornaments of the world, placed aloft to conduct its inferior movements, are extinguished, such an event resembles the apocalyptic vial poured into that element which changes its whole temperature, and is the presage of fearful commotions, of thunders, lightnings, and tempests.

Independently of the political consequences that may result from an event which, by changing the order of succession, involves the prospects of the nation in obscurity, we are formed to be peculiarly affected by the spectacle of prostrate majesty, and fallen greatness. We are naturally prone to associate with the contemplation of exalted rank, the idea of superior felicity. We perceive in persons of that station, a command over the sources of enjoyment, a power of gratifying their inclinations in a multitude of forms, from which others are precluded: and as they appear to possess the means of supplying every want, of obviating every inconvenience, and of alleviating, to a considerable extent, every sorrow incident to humanity, it is not

to be wondered at that we regard them as the darlings of nature, and the favourites of fortune. The share they possess of the bounties and indulgences of Providence, is so much beyond the ordinary measure of allotment, and so large a portion of human art and industry is exerted in smoothing their passage, and strewing flowers in their path, that we almost necessarily associate ideas of superior enjoyment with a description of persons, for whose gratification the inferior classes seem born to toil.

We are so constituted also, that the sight of felicity, when it is not mixed with envy, is always connected with pleasing emotions, whether it is considered as possessed by ourselves or by others; not excepting even the animal creation. For who can behold their harmless pleasures, the wild gambols of their young, rioting in the superabundance of life and excess of pleasure, without experiencing a momentary exhilaration? As their enjoyments are considered too scanty and limited to excite a feeling of envy; so, from an opposite cause, the privileges attached to an elevated station seldom produce it. Happily for mankind, the corrosions of that baleful passion are almost entirely confined to equals, or to those between whom there exist some pretensions to equality; who, having started from nearly the same level, have recently distanced each other, in the chase of distinction, or of glory. But when the superiority we contemplate has been long possessed, when it is such as renders compe-

tition hopeless, and comparison absurd, the feelings of rivalry are superseded by an emotion of respect, and the spectacle presented of superior felicity, produces its primary and natural effect. We dwell with complacency on a system of arrangements so exquisitely adapted apparently to the production of happiness, and yield a sort of involuntary homage to the person in whom it centres, without appearing to disturb our pretensions, or interfere with our pursuits. Hence, of all factitious distinctions, that of birth is least exposed to envy; the thought of aspiring to an equality in that respect, being instantly checked by the idea of impossibility. When we turn our eyes towards the possessors of distinguished opulence and power, so many glittering appendages crowd on the imagination, productive of agreeable emotion, that we lose sight of the essential equality of the species, and think less of the persons themselves, than of the artificial splendour which surrounds them.

That there is some illusion in these sentiments, that the balance in respect of real enjoyment is far from being so decidedly in favour of the opulent and the great, as they prompt us to imagine, is an indubitable fact. Nevertheless, the disposition they create to regard the external appearances of opulence and power, with respect unmingled with envy, and to acquiesce with pleasure in the visible superiority they confer, is productive of incalculable benefit. But for this, the distinctions of rank, and the privileges and immunities attached to each, on

which much of the tranquillity and all the improvements of society depend, would fall a prey to an unfeeling rapacity; the many would hasten to seize on the exclusive advantages of the few; and the selfish passions, uncontrolled by a more refined order of feeling, would break forth with a fury that would quickly overwhelm the mounds and fences of legal authority. By means of the sentiments to which we have adverted, society exerts a sort of plastic power over its members, which forms their habits and inclinations to a cheerful acquiescence in the allotments of Providence, and bestows on the positive institutions of man the stability of nature.

As the necessary consequence of these sentiments, when great reverses befall the higher orders, the mind experiences a kind of revulsion; the contrast of their present with their past situation, produces a deeper sympathy than is experienced on other occasions. We measure the height from which they fell, and calculate the extent of their loss on a scale proportioned to the value we have been accustomed to attach to the immunities and enjoyments of which it deprives them. The sight of such elaborate preparations for happiness rendered abortive, of a majestic fabric so proudly seated and exquisitely adorned suddenly overturned, disturbs the imagination like a convulsion of nature, and diffuses a feeling of insecurity and terror, as though nothing remained on which we could repose with confidence. Hence, the misfortunes of princes who have survived their greatness, and terminated a

brilliant career by captivity and death, have been selected by poets in every age as the basis of those fictions which are invented for the purpose of producing commiseration.

To guard against these feelings being carried to excess, so as to induce an oblivion of moral distinction, a sacrifice of principle, a mean and pusillanimous prostration before the profligate and the vicious; to urge the necessity of correcting their aberrations by the dictates of reason and religion, is foreign to our purpose. The utility of a class of feelings is not the less certain for their being liable to abuse. Let me rather avail myself of the awful dispensation before us, to suggest a warning to the possessors of these envied distinctions, not to overrate their value, nor confide in their continuance, which at most are but *the flower of the field*, as much distinguished by its superior frailty, as by its beauty. They belong to the *fashion of that world which passeth away;* they contribute much to embellish and beautify this transitory abode, to the ornament of which the Supreme Being has shown himself not inattentive. As the God of order, whatever tends to secure and perpetuate it, is the object of his approbation; nor can we doubt that he regards with complacency that distribution of men into distinct orders, which assimilates the social system to that variety which pervades the economy of nature.

Let their possessors remember, however, that they must shortly be divested of the brilliant

appendages and splendid ornaments of rank and station, and enter into a world where they are unknown; where they will carry nothing but the essential elements of their being, impressed with those indelible characters which must sustain the scrutiny of Omniscience. These artificial decorations, be it remembered, are not, properly speaking, their own; the elevation to which they belong is momentary; and as the merit of an actor is not estimated by the part which he performs, but solely by the truth and propriety of his representation, and the peasant is often applauded where the monarch is hissed; so when the great drama of life is concluded, he who allots its scenes, and determines its period, will take an account of his servants, and assign to each his punishment or reward, in his proper character. The existence of a perfect and eternal mind, renders such an order of things necessary; for with whatever skill society may be organized, still it will make but a faint approximation to our limited conceptions of justice; and since there is an original mind in which these ideas subsist in their utmost perfection, whence the finite conception of justice is transcribed, they must at some period or other be realized. That they are not so at present is obvious. Merit is often depressed, vice exalted; and with the best regulations of human wisdom, executed with the utmost impartiality, malevolence will ever be armed with the power of inflicting a thousand nameless indignities and oppressions, with

perfect impunity. Though the efficacy of human laws is far more conspicuous in restraining and punishing than in rewarding, in which their resources are extremely limited, it is only those flagrant offences that disturb the public tranquillity to which they extend; while the silent stream of misery issuing from private vice, which is incessantly impairing the foundations of public and individual happiness, by a secret and invisible sap, remains unchecked. The gradations even of rank, which are partly the cause and partly the effect of the highest social improvements, are accompanied with so many incidental evils, that nothing but an enlarged contemplation of their ultimate tendency and effect, could reconcile us to the monstrous incongruities and deformities they display, in wealth which ruins its possessor, titles which dignify the base, and influence exerted to none but the most mischievous purposes. The enlightened observer of human affairs is often struck with horror at the consequences incidentally resulting from laws and institutions which, on account of their general utility, command his unfeigned veneration. These are the unequivocal indications of a fallen state; but since it is also a state of probation, the irregularities by which it is distinguished, in the frequent exaltation of the wicked, and the humiliation and depression of the righteous, are such as furnish the fittest materials for trial. What state, let me ask, is better calculated than the present, to put it to the test, whether we will suffer ourselves

to be swayed by the dictates of reason, or the fascinations of pleasure; whether we will allow the future to predominate over the present, the things that are invisible over those that are seen; and, preferring an eternal recompense with God to the transitory objects of concupiscence, submit to be controlled by his will, and led by his Spirit.

Whatever reception these views may meet with, one thing is certain, that it is invariably the most necessary they should be inculcated where they are the most unwelcome; and that if there be any one description of persons more in danger than another, of being lulled into a forgetfulness of future prospects, it is to them, especially, the warning voice should be directed, the eternal world unveiled. And who, but will acknowledge, that this danger is especially incident to such as bask in the smiles of fortune, and, possessing an unlimited command over the sources of enjoyment, are bound to the world by the most vivid associations of pleasure and of hope? *Give me neither poverty nor riches,* said one of the wisest of men, *lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain.* While riches exempt their possessors from the temptation of meaner vices, his observation taught him their peculiar exposure to practical impiety, and to that forgetfulness of God which is the root and core of all our disorders.

Let them turn their eyes, then, for a moment, to this illustrious Princess; who, while she lived, concentred in herself whatever distinguishes the higher orders of society, and may now be considered as addressing them from the tomb.

Born to inherit the most illustrious monarchy in the world, and united at an early period to the object of her choice, whose virtues amply justified her preference, she enjoyed (what is not always the privilege of that rank) the highest connubial felicity, and had the prospect of combining all the tranquil enjoyments of private life, with the splendour of a royal station. Placed on the summit of society, to her every eye was turned, in her every hope was centred, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity, except perpetuity. To a grandeur of mind suited to her royal birth and lofty destination, she joined an exquisite taste for the beauties of nature and the charms of retirement; where, far from the gaze of the multitude, and the frivolous agitations of fashionable life, she employed her hours in visiting, with her distinguished consort, the cottages of the poor, in improving her virtues, in perfecting her reason, and acquiring the knowledge best adapted to qualify her for the possession of power, and the cares of empire. One thing only was wanting to render our satisfaction complete, in the prospect of the accession of such a Princess; it was, that she might become the living mother of children.

The long wished-for moment at length arrived: but alas! the event anticipated with such eagerness will form the most melancholy part of our history.

It is no reflection on this amiable Princess, to suppose, that in her early dawn, with the *dew of her youth* so fresh upon her, she anticipated a long series of years, and expected to be led through successive scenes of enchantment, rising above each other in fascination and beauty. It is natural to suppose she identified herself with this great nation, which she was born to govern; and that, while she contemplated its preeminent lustre in arts and in arms, its commerce encircling the globe, its colonies diffused through both hemispheres, and the beneficial effects of its institutions extending to the whole earth; she considered them as so many component parts of her grandeur. Her heart, we may well conceive, would often be ruffled with emotions of trembling ecstasy, when she reflected that it was her province to live entirely for others, to compose the felicity of a great people, to move in a sphere which would afford scope for the exercise of philanthropy the most enlarged, of wisdom the most enlightened; and that, while others are doomed to pass through the world in obscurity, she was to supply the materials of history, and to impart that impulse to society, which was to decide the destiny of future generations. Fired with the ambition of equalling, or surpassing, the most distinguished of her

predecessors, she probably did not despair of reviving the remembrance of the brightest parts of their story, and of once more attaching the epoch of British glory to the annals of a female reign. It is needless to add that the nation went with her, and probably outstripped her, in these delightful anticipations. We fondly hoped, that a life so inestimable would be protracted to a distant period, and that, after diffusing the blessings of a just and enlightened administration, and being surrounded by a numerous progeny, she would, gradually, in a good old age, sink under the horizon, amidst the embraces of her family, and the benedictions of her country. But alas! these delightful visions are fled, and what do we behold in their room, but the funeral pall and shroud, a palace in mourning, a nation in tears, and the shadow of death settled over both like a cloud! O the unspeakable vanity of human hopes! the incurable blindness of man to futurity! ever doomed to grasp at shadows, to seize with avidity what turns to dust and ashes in his hands, *to sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.*

How must the heart of the royal parent be torn with anguish on this occasion; deprived of a daughter, who combined every quality suited to engage his affection and elevate his hopes; an only child, the heir of his throne; and doomed, apparently, to behold the sceptre pass from his posterity into other hands; his sorrow must be such as words are inadequate to portray. Nor is it possible to withhold our tender sympathy from

the unhappy mother, who, in addition to the wounds she has received by the loss of her nearest relations, and by still more trying vicissitudes, has witnessed the extinction of her last hope, in the sudden removal of one, in whose bosom she might naturally hope to repose her griefs, and find a peaceful haven from the storms of life and the tossings of the ocean. But above all, the illustrious consort of this lamented Princess is entitled to the deepest commiseration. How mysterious are the ways of Providence, in rendering the virtues of this distinguished personage the source of his greatest trials! By these he merited the distinction to which monarchs aspired in vain, and by these he exposed himself to a reverse of fortune, the severity of which can only be adequately estimated by this illustrious mourner. These virtues, however, will not be permitted to lose their reward. They will find it in the grateful attachment of the British nation, in the remembrance of his having contributed the principal share to the happiness of the most amiable and exalted of women; and, above all, we humbly hope, when the agitations of time shall cease, in a re-union with the object of his attachment, before the presence of Him who will *wipe every tear from the eye.*

When Jehovah was pleased to command Isaiah the prophet to make a public proclamation in the ears of the people, what was it, think you, he was ordered to announce? Was it some profound secret of nature, which had baffled the inquiries

of philosophers? or some great political convulsion which was to change the destiny of empires? No: these were not the sort of communications most suited to the grandeur of his nature, or the exigencies of ours. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.** Instead of presenting to our eyes the mutations of power, and the revolutions of states and kingdoms, he exhibits a more awful and affecting spectacle—the human race itself withering under the breath of his mouth, perishing under his rebuke; while he plants his eternal word, which subsists from generation to generation, in undecaying vigour, to console our wretchedness, and impregnate the dying mass with the seed of immortality. As the frailty of man, and the perpetuity of *his* promises, are the greatest contrast the universe presents, so the practical impression of this truth, however obvious, is the beginning of wisdom, nor is there a degree of moral elevation to which it will not infallibly conduct us.

The annunciation of life and immortality by the gospel, did it contain no other truth, were sufficient to cast all the discoveries of science into shade, and to reduce the highest improvements of reason

* Isaiah xl. 6—8.

to the comparative nothingness which the flight of a moment bears to eternity.

By this discovery, the prospects of human nature are infinitely widened, the creature of yesterday becomes the child of eternity; and as felicity is not the less valuable in the eye of reason because it is remote, nor the misery which is certain, less to be deprecated because it is not immediately felt, the care of our future interests becomes our chief, and, properly speaking, our only concern. All besides will shortly be nothing; and therefore, whenever it comes into competition with these, it is as the small dust of the balance.

Is it now any subject of regret, think you, to this amiable Princess, so suddenly removed, *that her sun went down while it was yet day?* or that, prematurely snatched from prospects the most brilliant and enchanting, she was compelled to close her eyes so soon on a world, of whose grandeur she formed so conspicuous a part? No: other objects occupy her mind, other thoughts engage her attention, and will continue to engage it for ever. All things with her are changed; and viewed from that pure and ineffable light, for which we humbly hope religion prepared her, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty emits a feeble and sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear but so many troops of pilgrims, in different garbs, toiling through the same vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.

In the full fruition of eternal joys, she is so far from looking back with lingering regret on what she has quitted, that she is surprised it had the power of affecting her so much; that she took so deep an interest in the scenes of this shadowy state of being, while so near to an *eternal weight of glory;* and, as far as memory may be supposed to contribute to her happiness by associating the present with the past, it is not the recollection of her illustrious birth and elevated prospects, but that she visited the abodes of the poor, and learned to weep with those that weep; that, surrounded with the fascinations of pleasure, she was not inebriated by its charms; that she resisted the strongest temptations to pride, preserved her ears open to truth, was impatient of the voice of flattery; in a word, that she sought and cherished the inspirations of piety, and *walked humbly with her God.** This is fruit which survives when the flower withers—the only ornaments and treasures we can carry into eternity.

While we look at this event with the eyes of flesh, and survey it in the aspect it bears towards our national prospects, it appears a most singular and affecting catastrophe. But considered in itself, or, more properly, in its relation to a certain,

* From the obscurity of the Author's situation, he must be supposed incapable of authenticating these traits in her character from his personal knowledge; but from the respectable publications in which they are related, he entertains no doubt of their truth.

though invisible futurity, its consequences are but commensurate to those which result from the removal of the meanest individual. He whose death is as little regarded as the fall of a leaf in the forest, and he whose departure involves a nation in despair, are, in this view of the subject (by far the most important one), upon a level. Before the presence of the great I AM, into which they both immediately enter, these distinctions vanish, and the true statement of the fact, on either supposition, is, that an immortal spirit has finished its earthly career; has passed the barriers of the invisible world, to appear before its Maker, in order to receive that sentence which will fix its irrevocable doom, *according to the deeds done in the body*. On either supposition, an event has taken place which has no parallel in the revolutions of time, the consequences of which have not room to expand themselves within a narrower sphere than an endless duration. An event has occurred, the issues of which must ever baffle and elude all finite comprehensions, by concealing themselves in the depths of that abyss, of that eternity, which is the dwelling-place of Deity, where there is sufficient space for the destiny of each, among the innumerable millions of the human race, to develope itself, and without interference or confusion, to sustain and carry forward its separate infinity of interest.

That there is nothing hyperbolic or extravagant in these conceptions, but, that they are the *true*

sayings of God, you may learn from almost every page of the sacred oracles. For what are they, in fact, but a different mode of announcing the doctrine taught us in the following words: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?*

When it is considered that the doctrine of a life to come, is ascertained by the advent of the Messiah, with a degree of evidence so superior to that which attaches to any other futurity, that he who refuses to believe it on his testimony, would not be persuaded although one rose from the dead, the propensity to disregard it, however general, is the most astonishing phenomenon in nature. Man is naturally a prospective creature, endowed, not only with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, but also of anticipating the future, and dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote. He is capable of carrying his views, of attaching his anxieties, to a period much more distant than that which measures the limits of his present existence; capable, we distinctly perceive, of plunging into the depths of future duration, of identifying himself with the sentiments and opinions of a distant age, and of enjoying, by anticipation, the fame of which he is aware he shall never be conscious, and the praises he shall never hear. So strongly is he disposed to link his feelings with futurity, that shadows become realities, when contemplated as subsisting there;

and the phantom of posthumous celebrity, the faint image of his being, impressed on future generations, is often preferred to the whole of his present existence, with all its warm and vivid realities. The complexion of the day that is passing over him, is determined by the anticipations of the morrow: the present borrows its brightness and its gloom from the future, which, presenting itself to his contemplation as in a mirror, incessantly agitates him with apparitions of terror or delight. In the calculations of interest, the mind is affected in the same manner; it is perpetuity which stamps its value on whatever we possess, so that the lowest epicure would prefer a small accession to his property to the most exquisite repast; and none are found so careless of futurity, as not to prefer the inheritance he may bequeath, to one of equal value, the title to which expires with his life.

How is it, then, that we find it so difficult to prevail upon men to fix their attention firmly on another world, that real future existence which reason assures us is probable, which revelation teaches us is certain, which is separated from us by so narrow a boundary, and into which thousands of our fellow-creatures are passing every moment? How is it that the professed followers of Him especially, who descended from heaven, who *came forth from the Father* to conduct us thither, are so indisposed to turn their thoughts and contemplations to that unchanging state of

being, into which they are so shortly to enter? It is not, we perceive, that to move forward is not congenial with our mental constitution: it is not because we are so enchanted with the present scene, as to be incapable of diverting our attention from it; for we are continually disquieted by a restless desire of something future: it is not because we are seldom warned or reminded of another state of existence; for every funeral bell, every opening grave, every symptom of decay within, and of change without us, is a separate warning, to say nothing of the present most affecting dispensation, which has filled this nation with such consternation and distress."

Were any other event of far inferior moment, ascertained by evidence, which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of a life to come; had we equal assurance that after a very limited, though uncertain period, we should be called to migrate into a distant land, whence we were never to return, the intelligence would fill every breast with solicitude; it would become the theme of every tongue; and we should avail ourselves with the utmost eagerness of all the means of information respecting the prospects which awaited us in that unknown country. Much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure; we should cease to regard the place we now inhabit as our home, and nothing would be considered of moment but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange

is it, then, that, with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection recurs, we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising, that the volume we profess to recognise as the record of immortality, and the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain respecting the portion which awaits us, should be consigned to neglect, and rarely, if ever, consulted with the serious intention of ascertaining our future condition?

That a creature formed for an endless duration should be disposed to turn his attention from that object, and to contract his views and prospects within a circle which, compared to eternity, is but a mathematical point, is truly astonishing; and as it is impossible to account for it from the natural constitution of the mind, it must originate in some great *moral* cause. It shews that some strange catastrophe has befallen the species; that some deep and radical malady is inherent in the moral system. Though philosophers of a certain description may attempt to explain and justify it on some ingenious hypothesis; yet, in spite of metaphysical subtleties, the alarming inquiry will still return—How is it that the disposition of mankind is so much at variance with their prospects? that no train of reflections is more unwelcome than that which is connected with their eternal

home? If the change is considered as a happy one,—if the final abode to which we are hastening is supposed to be an improvement on the present, why shrink back from it with aversion? If it is contemplated as a state of suffering, it is natural to inquire what it is that has invested it with so dark and sombre a character! What is it which has enveloped that species of futurities in a gloom which pervades no other? If the indisposition to realize a life to come arises in any measure from a vague presentiment that it will bring us, so to speak, into a closer contact with the Deity, by presenting clearer manifestations of his character and perfections, (and who can doubt that this is a principal cause?) the proof it affords of a great deterioration in our moral condition, is complete. For who will suppose it possible a disposition to hide himself from his Creator should be an original part of the constitution of a reasonable creature? or what more portentous and unnatural, than for him that is formed to shun the presence of his Maker, and to place his felicity in the forgetfulness of Him *in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being?* If he is pained and disquieted whenever he is forcibly reminded of Him whose power sustains, and whose bounty replenishes the universe with whatever is good and fair; if the source of being and of happiness is the object of terror instead of confidence and love, it is not easy to conceive what can afford a stronger conviction of guilt, or a more certain presage of danger.

The conclusion to which we are conducted is confirmed by inspiration, which assures us that a great revolution has actually befallen the species; and that, in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, we have incurred the forfeiture of the divine favour, and the loss of the divine image. In this situation it is not difficult to perceive, that the economy adapted to our relief must include two things, the means of expiating guilt, and the means of moral renovation: in other words, an atoning sacrifice, and a sanctifying Spirit. Both these objects are accomplished in the advent of the Saviour, who, by presenting himself as a sin-offering, has made ample satisfaction to offended justice, and purchased by his merits the renovating Spirit, which is freely offered to as many as sincerely seek it. By the former, the obstructions to our happiness arising from the divine nature, are removed; by the latter, the disqualification springing from our own. By providing a sacrifice of infinite value in the person of the Only Begotten, he has consulted his majesty as the righteous Governor of the world, and has reconciled the seemingly incompatible claims of justice and of mercy. By bestowing the Spirit as the fruit of *his* mediation and intercession, whose *soul was made an offering for sin,* pollution is purged, and that image of God restored to sinful creatures, which capacitates them for the enjoyment of pure and perfect felicity. Thus every requisite which we can conceive necessary in a restorative dispen-

sation, is found in the gospel, exhibited with a perspicuity level to the meanest capacity, combined with such a depth in the contrivance, and such an exquisite adaptation to our state and condition, as surpass finite comprehension. This is the substance of those glad tidings which constitute the *gospel;* to the cordial reception of which, must all the difference be ascribed, which will shortly be found between the condition of the saved and the lost.

Be assured, my christian brethren, it is by a profound submission of the soul to this doctrine, offensive as it may be to the pride of human virtue, repugnant as it undoubtedly is to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, that we must *acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.* When we mention peace, however, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect; we mean a tranquillity which rests upon an unshaken basis, which no anticipations, however remote, no power of reflection, however piercing or profound, no evolutions which time may disclose or eternity conceal, are capable of impairing; a peace which is founded on the oath and promise of Him who cannot lie; which, springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father of spirits, makes us to share in his fulness, to become a partner with him in his eternity; a repose, pure and serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heavens from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph,

natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.

While the prize is so transcendently great, no unparalleled efforts, no incredible exertions, are requisite to obtain it; it is placed within the grasp of every hand. If the great sacrifice had not been presented, if the succours of heaven had not been offered, if the glad tidings had not been proclaimed, nor life and immortality brought to light, our condition would indeed have been deplorable; and little encouragement should we have had, to engage in the great work of seeking salvation. But now *all things are ready*, and the chief, or, rather, the only prerequisite, is a child-like docility, a disposition to derive wisdom from the fountain of light, strength from the strong, together with a fixed and immovable conviction, that the care of our eternal interests is the grand concern.

Some events, by the established course of nature, are rendered so certain, that, however important in their consequences, they are not the proper subjects of deliberation. Their certainty, assumed as a basis in all our calculations and reasonings, is entitled to great weight in adjusting the plan of future operation; but it is with a view to other objects that our schemes are formed, and our anxiety exerted. Other events are precluded from deliberation by an opposite reason, the perfect conviction that they will never arrive. Both these are regarded by wise men as fixed, immovable

points, which supply motives for submission, but no incentives to exertion.

There is another class of futurities, whose existence is not ascertained by immutable, independent causes; they are placed in some measure within our reach, are subjected in a degree to our control, and are neither so certain as to produce security, nor so impossible or improbable as to occasion despair. These form the motives to human activity, and the objects of rational pursuit; in the proper selection of which, and the application of means best adapted to their attainment, consists the whole wisdom of man. The hopes and fears associated with the contemplation of events of this nature, are the springs which set mankind in motion; and while the frivolous and the dissipated fix their attention on such as are productive of transient and momentary impressions, the wise in their generation select those which are the basis of permanent interests, such as wealth, power, and reputation; which, whoever acquires by a course of strenuous exertion, is applauded and extolled as a pattern for universal imitation. Yet, what extreme short-sightedness characterizes the most prosperous votary of the world, compared with the humblest candidate for immortality! *This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings.* Of the great prizes in human life, it is not often the lot of the most enterprising to obtain many: they are placed on opposite sides of the path, so that it is

impossible to approach one of them, without proportionably receding from another; whence it results, that the wisest plans are founded on a compromise between good and evil, where much that is the object of desire is finally relinquished and abandoned, in order to secure superior advantages. The candidate for immortality is reduced to no such alternative: the possession of his object comprehends all: it combines in itself, without imperfection and without alloy, all the scattered portions of good for which the votaries of the world are accustomed to contend. Such also is our constitution, and so little is the sublunary state adapted to be our rest, that we are usually more alive to the good we want, than to that which we possess; that, rendered delicate by indulgence, rather than satiated by enjoyment, the slightest check in the career of our desires, inflicts a wound which their gratification in every other particular is incapable of healing. Thus the wretched Haman, in the highest plenitude of affluence and power, exclaimed, *All this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai sits in the gate.* Such is the capricious fastidiousness of the human heart, chiefly in those who are most pampered with the gifts of fortune, that the person whom nothing has the power of gratifying long, the merest trifle is sufficient to displease, so that he is often extremely chagrined and disquieted by the absence of that, whose presence would scarcely be felt. The fruition of religious objects calms and purifies, as much as

it delights; it strengthens, instead of enervating, the mind, which it fills without agitating, and, by settling it on its proper basis, diffuses an unspeakable repose through all its powers.

As the connexion between means and ends is not so indissolubly fixed as to preclude the possibility of disappointment, and *the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor riches to men of understanding*, the votary of the world is never secure of his object, which frequently mocks his pursuit, by vanishing at the moment when he is just on the point of seizing it. He often possesses not even the privilege of failing with impunity, and has no medium left between complete success and infallible destruction. In the struggles of ambition, in violent competitions for power or for glory, how slender the partition betwixt the widest extremes of fortune, and how few the steps and apparently slight the circumstances, which sever the throne from the prison, the palace from the tomb! *So Tibni died,* says the sacred historian, with inimitable simplicity, *and Omri reigned.* He who makes the care of his eternal interests his chief pursuit, is exposed to no such perils and vicissitudes. His hopes will be infallibly crowned with success. The soil on which he bestows his labour will infinitely more than recompense his care; and however disproportioned the extent and duration of his efforts to the magnitude of their object, however insufficient to secure it by their intrinsic vigour, the faithfulness of God

is pledged to bring them to a prosperous issue. *Ask,* said our Lord, *and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For whosoever asketh receiveth; and whosoever seeketh findeth; and whosoever knocketh, to him it shall be opened.* The pursuit of salvation is the only enterprise in which no one fails from weakness, none from an invincible ignorance of futurity, none from the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, against which there exists no effectual security, none from those occasional eclipses of knowledge and fits of inadvertence, to which the most acute and wakeful intellect is exposed. How suitable is it to the character of the Being who reveals himself by the name of *Love,* to render the object which is alone worthy of being aspired to with ardour, the only one to which all may, without presumption, aspire; and while he conceals thrones and sceptres in the shadow of his hand, and bestows them where he pleases, with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, to proclaim to the utmost bounds of the earth, *Let him that is athirst come: and whomsoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely.*

But the impotence of the world never appears more conspicuous than when it has exhausted its powers in the gratification of its votaries, by placing them in a situation which leaves them nothing further to hope. It frustrates the sanguine expectations of its admirers as much by what it bestows, as by what it withholds, and reserves its severest

disappointment for the season of possession. The agitation, the uncertainty, the varied emotions of hope and fear which accompany the pursuit of worldly objects, create a powerful interest, and maintain a brisk and wholesome circulation; but when the pursuit is over, unless some other is substituted in its place, satiety succeeds to enjoyment, and pleasures cease to please. Tired of treading the same circle, of beholding the same spectacles, of frequenting the same amusements, and repeating the same follies, with nothing to awaken sensibility, or to stimulate to action, the minion of fortune is exposed to an insuperable languor; he sinks under an insupportable weight of ease, and falls a victim to incurable dejection and despondency. Religion, by presenting objects ever interesting and ever new, by bestowing much, by promising more, and dilating the heart with the expectation of a certain *indefinite* good, clearly ascertained, though indistinctly seen, the pledge and earnest of which is far more delightful than all that irreligious men possess, is the only effectual antidote to this evil. *He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst.* The vanity which adheres to the world in every form, when its pleasures and occupations are regarded as *ultimate objects*, is at once corrected when they are viewed in connexion with a boundless futurity; and whatever may be their intrinsic value, they rise into dignity and importance when considered as the seed of a future harvest, as the path which, however obscure, leads

to honour and immortality, as the province of labour allotted us, in order to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. Nothing is little which is related to such a system; nothing vain or frivolous which has the remotest influence on such prospects. Considered as a state of probation, our present condition loses all its inherent meanness; it derives a moral grandeur even from the shortness of its duration, when viewed as a contest for an immortal crown, in which the candidates are exhibited on a theatre, a spectacle to beings of the highest order, who, conscious of the tremendous importance of the issue, of the magnitude of the interest at stake, survey the combatants from on high with benevolent and trembling solicitude.

Finally, we are *made* for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; it is our high calling and destination; and not to pursue it with diligence, is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the Author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and, in consequence of neglecting the great salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express, nor finite minds formed to grasp. Eternity, it is surely not necessary to remind you, invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance, entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared to which,

all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object, it is easy to exceed the proper estimate; and even of the distressing event which has so recently occurred, the feeling which many of us possess, is probably adequate to the occasion. The nation has certainly not been wanting in the proper expression of its poignant regret at the sudden removal of this most lamented Princess, nor of their sympathy with the royal family, deprived by this visitation of its brightest ornament. Sorrow is painted in every countenance, the pursuits of business and of pleasure have been suspended, and the kingdom is covered with the signals of distress. But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?

But it is time to draw the veil over this heart-withering prospect, remembering only *what manner*

of persons we ought to be, who are walking on the brink of such an eternity, and possess no assurance but that the next moment will convey us to the regions of happiness or of despair. Impressed habitually with this solemn recollection, we shall *rejoice as those who rejoice not, we shall weep as those who weep not, we shall use the world as not abusing it, remembering that the end of all things is at hand.*

It is scarcely to be supposed that so remarkable an example of the frailty and uncertainty of life as the recent providence has displayed, has failed of impressing serious reflection on the minds of multitudes; it is difficult to conceive of that degree of insensibility which could totally resist such a warning. But there is reason to fear that in a great majority of instances it has produced no salutary fruit, and will leave them, after a very short period, as careless and unconcerned about a preparation for an hereafter as before; like the unthinking feathered tribe, who, when one of the number falls by the hand of the fowler, are scared for a moment, and fly from the fatal spot with screams of horror, but quickly recovering their confidence, alight again on the same place, and expose themselves to the same danger. Thus many, whose gaiety has been eclipsed, and whose thoughtless career of irreligion and dissipation has experienced a momentary check, will doubtless soon return with eager impetuosity to the same course, as *the horse rusheth into the battle.* The

same amusements will enchant, the same society corrupt, and the same temptations ensnare them; with this very important difference, that the effort necessary to surmount the present impression will superinduce a fresh degree of obduration, by which they will become more completely accoutred in the panoply of darkness. The next visitation, though it may be in some respects more affecting, because more near, will probably impress them less; and as death has penetrated the palace in vain, though it should even come up into their chamber, and take away the delight of their eyes at a stroke, they will be less religiously moved.

What may we suppose is the reason of this; why are so many impressed, and so few profited? It is unquestionably because they are not obedient to the *first* suggestion of conscience. What that suggestion is, it may not be easy precisely to determine; but it certainly is *not* to make haste to efface the impression by frivolous amusement, by gay society, by entertaining reading, or even by secular employment: it is probably to meditate and pray. Let the first whisper, be it what it may, of the internal monitor, be listened to as an oracle, as the still small voice which Elijah heard, when he wrapped his face in his mantle, recognising it to be the voice of God. Be assured it will not mislead you; it will conduct you one step at least towards happiness and truth; and, by a prompt and punctual compliance with it, you will be prepared to receive ampler communications and

superior light. If, after a serious retrospect of your past lives, of the objects you have pursued, and the principles which have determined your conduct, they appear to be such as will ill sustain the scrutiny of a dying hour, dare to be faithful to yourselves, and shun with horror that cruel treachery to your best interests, which would impel you to sacrifice the happiness of eternity to the quiet of a moment. Let the light of truth, which is the light of heaven, however painful for the present, be admitted in its full force; and whatever secrets it may discover *in the chambers of imagery,* while it unveils *still greater and greater abominations,* shrink not from the view, but entreat rather the assistance of Him whose prerogative it is to search the heart, and to try the reins, to render the investigation more profound and impartial. The sight of a penitent on his knees is a spectacle which moves heaven; and the compassionate Redeemer, who, when he beheld Saul in that situation, exclaimed, *Behold, he prayeth,* will not be slow or reluctant to strengthen you by his might, and console you by his Spirit. When a *new and living way* is opened *into the holiest of all,* by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it, not to arise and go to our Father, but to prefer remaining at a guilty distance, encompassed with famine, to the rich and everlasting provisions of his house, will be a source of insupportable anguish when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, enter into the kingdom of God, and ourselves shut

out. You are probably not aware of what importance it is to improve these sacred visitations; have not considered that they form a crisis, which if often neglected will never return. It is impossible too often to inculcate the momentous truth, that the character is not formed by passive impressions, but by voluntary actions, and that we shall be judged hereafter, not by what we have felt, but by what we have done.

You will perceive, my brethren, that I have confined my attention, in this discourse, to such reflections as we would wish every individual to indulge, in the contemplation of this great national calamity, without adverting to its aspect on the political prospects and interests of the country. The discussion of the subject in that view of it is equally unsuited to my province, and to my talents. I leave it to politicians to investigate the effects it is likely to produce on the prosperity of the British empire; esteeming myself sufficiently happy if I may be the humble instrument of fixing your attention on subjects best fitted to prepare you for *a kingdom which cannot be moved;* being convinced, as you may infer from my constant practice, that this is neither the place nor the season for political discussion, and that the teachers of religion are called to a nobler occupation than to subserve the interests of party, or fan the flames of public dissension. In perfect consistence with this observation permit me to remark, that it appears to me highly presumptuous to attempt to

scan the secret purpose of the Deity, in this dispensation, by assigning it to *specific* moral causes. *His ways are in the great deep, and his paths past finding out.* That it ought to be considered as a signal rebuke and chastisement, designed to bring our sins to remembrance, there is no doubt; but to attempt to specify the particular crimes and delinquencies which have drawn down this visitation, is inconsistent with the modesty which ought to accompany all inquiries into the mysteries of Providence; and especially repugnant to the spirit which this most solemn and affecting event should inspire. At a time when every creature ought to tremble under the judgments of God, it ill becomes us to indulge in reciprocal recrimination; and when *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint,* it is not for the members to usurp the seat of judgement, by hurling accusations and reproaches against each other. Are there not sufficient provocations to be found in all ranks and classes, from the lowest to the highest, to justify and account for these and still greater severities? or is it necessary to look farther for the vindication of the equity of the divine proceeding, than to the open impiety and profaneness, the perjury and injustice, the profanation of the sabbath and contempt of sacred things, the profligacy of the lower, and the irreligion and impurity of the higher orders, which, notwithstanding the multitude of splendid exceptions, still form the national character?

That we are a people severely scourged and corrected, none will deny; but that we have *turned to him that smiteth us,* it would be presumption to assert. Yet if any people were ever more forcibly reminded of the interposition of Providence than another, it is certain we are that people; having been conducted through the most intricate and mysterious paths, in such a manner as totally to confound the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent, both in our adverse and prosperous fortunes. Preserved amidst the wreck of nations, and the hurricane of revolution which swept for twenty years over the face of Europe, with ruin and desolation in its train, we have not only been permitted to maintain our soil unviolated, and our independence unimpaired; but have come forth from a contest of unparalleled difficulty and extent, with a more splendid reputation, and in a more commanding attitude, than we possessed at any former period. Our successes, both by sea and land, have been so brilliant and decisive, that it is not easy to determine whether we have acquired most glory as a military or a maritime power; while our achievements on each element have been such as to distance all competition. A profound peace has at length succeeded to a scene of hostilities, which, for the fourth part of a century, covered the earth with armies, shook every kingdom to its basis, and ravaged and depopulated the fairest portion of the globe. But

what has been the issue? We have retired from the combat, successful indeed beyond our most sanguine expectations,—but bleeding, breathless, exhausted; with symptoms of internal weakness and decay, from which, if we ever entirely recover, it must be when the present generation has disappeared from the earth. When was it ever known before, that peace was more destructive than war?—that a people were more impoverished by their victories than their defeats? and that the epoch of their glory was the epoch of their sufferings? Peace, instead of being the nurse of industry and the harbinger of plenty, as the experience of ages had taught us to expect, has brought poverty, discontent, and distress in her train; inflicting all the privations of a state of hostility without its hopes; and all the miseries of war without its splendour. What but an Omnipotent hand could have infused such venom into the greatest of blessings as utterly to transform its nature, and cause it to produce some of the worst effects of a curse?

While we were engaged in the fearful struggle which has at length been so successfully terminated, it pleased the great Ruler of nations to visit our aged, beloved, and revered Monarch with one of the most dreadful calamities incident to human nature, the pressure of which still continues, we fear, with unabated severity. While we are deeply moved at the awful spectacle of majesty labouring under a permanent and hopeless

eclipse, we are consoled with the reflection that he walked in the light while he possessed the light; that as long as the exercise of reason was continued, he communed with eternal truth; and that, from the shades which now envelope him, he will, at no very distant period, emerge into the brightness of celestial vision.

Though it may be difficult to conceive of a series of events more likely to awe the mind to a sense of the power and presence of the Deity, than those we have witnessed, he has thought fit to address us once more, if not in louder, yet in more solemn and affecting accents. An unexampled depopulation of the species by the sword, had indeed nearly rendered death the most familiar of all spectacles, and left few families unbereaved; but neither the narrative of battles, nor the sight of carnage, is best suited to inculcate the lessons of mortality; nor are the moral features of that last enemy ever less distinctly discerned, than in the moments when he is most busy; or on those fields of slaughter, where he appears the principal agent. The "pomp and circumstance of war," the tumultuous emotions of the combatants, and the eager anxiety of the contending parties, attentive to the important political consequences attached to victory and defeat, absorb every other impression, and obstruct the entrance of serious and pensive reflection.

How different the example of mortality presented on the present occasion! Without the

slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment's immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight, a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.* The mother, in the bloom of youth, spared just long enough to hear the tidings of her infant's death, almost immediately, as if summoned by his spirit, follows him into eternity. "It is a night much to be remembered." Who foretold this event, who conjectured it, who detected at a distance the faintest presage of its approach, which, when it arrived, mocked the efforts of human skill, as much by their incapacity to prevent, as their inability to foresee it? Unmoved by the tears of conjugal affection, unawed by the presence of grandeur, and the prerogatives of power, inexorable Death hastened to execute his stern commission, leaving nothing to royalty itself, but to retire and weep. Who can fail to discern, on this awful occasion, the hand of Him, who *bringeth princes to nothing, who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity; who says, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth; and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble?*

It is better, says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.*

While there are few who are not, at some season or other, conducted to that house, *a nation* enters it on the present visitation, there to learn, in the sudden extinction of the heiress of her monarchy, the vanity of all but what relates to eternity, and the absolute necessity of having our *loins girt, our lamps burning, and ourselves as those who are looking for the coming of the Bridegroom.*

We presume there are none who can survey this signal interposition of Providence with indifference, or refrain from "laying it to heart." No, illustrious Princess, it will be long ere the name of Charlotte Augusta is mentioned by Britons without tears: remote posterity also, which shall peruse thy melancholy story, will "lay it to heart," and will be tempted to ask, why no milder expedient could suffice to correct our levity, and make us mindful of our latter end; while they look back with tender pity on the amiable victim, who seems to have been destined by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, to warn and edify that people by her death, which she was not permitted, to the extent of her ambition, to benefit by her life.

Should her lamented and untimely end be the means of giving that religious impulse to the public mind, which shall turn us to righteousness, the benefits she will have conferred upon her country, in both worlds, will more than equal the glories of the most prosperous and extended reign.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. JOHN RYLAND, D.D,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL,

JUNE 5, 1825.

A SERMON.

JOHN xxi. 7.

That disciple whom Jesus loved.

IT has been alleged by unbelievers, as a defect in the morality of the gospel, that it neglects to inculcate patriotism and friendship. In regard to the first of these, it seems a sufficient reply, that though an attachment to our country as such, is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament, the duties which result from the relation in which christians stand to their rulers, are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions; and if the reciprocal duties of princes and magistrates are not enjoined with equal explicitness (as could not be expected in writings where they are not addressed), the design of their appointment is defined in such a manner, as leaves them at no loss to perceive what it is that they owe to the community. But where these duties are faithfully discharged by each party, the benefits derived from the social compact are so justly appreciated, and so deeply felt, that the

love of country is less liable to defect than to excess. In all well-ordered polities, if we may judge from the experience of past ages, the attachment of men to their country is in danger of becoming an absorbing principle, inducing not merely a forgetfulness of private interest, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. In the most virtuous times of the Roman republic, their country was the idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were at all times prepared to offer whole hecatombs of human victims: the interests of other nations were no further regarded than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no rights, but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex. With all their talents and their grandeur they were unprincipled oppressors, leagued in a determined conspiracy against the liberty and independence of mankind. In the eyes of an enlightened philanthropist, patriotism, pampered to such an excess, loses the name of virtue; it is the bond and cement of a guilty confederation. It was worthy of the wisdom of our great legislator to decline the express inculcation of a principle so liable to degenerate into excess, and to content himself with prescribing the virtues which are sure to develope it, as far as is consistent with the dictates of universal benevolence.

The second part of the objection to which we have alluded is susceptible of a similar answer.

Let it be admitted, that our Lord did not formally prescribe the cultivation of friendship;—and what then? He prescribed the virtues out of which it will naturally grow; he prescribed the cultivation of benevolence in all its diversified modes of operation. In his personal ministry, and in that of his apostles, he enjoined humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues. But these, in the ordinary course of events, and under the usual arrangements of Providence, are the best preparation for friendship, as well as the surest guarantee for the discharge of its duties, and the observation of its rights. For such is the secret affinity of mind to mind, such the social constitution of man, that he who is imbued with these dispositions can scarcely fail, in the pilgrimage of life, to contract a friendship with one or more of his species. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, some members of it will attract more of his attention, and awaken more of his complacency than others; where their virtues are equal, some more than ordinary congeniality of taste and temper will form a basis of preference, a motive for predilection, which, confirmed by habit, and strengthened by the reciprocal exchange of gratifying attentions and kind offices, will at length ripen into friendship. A mind habitually tender easily melts into softness,

and exchanges the sentiments of esteem for those of specific attachment and endearment. What is friendship in virtuous minds but the concentration of benevolent emotions, heightened by respect and increased by exercise, on one or more objects? Friendship is not a state of feeling, whose elements are specifically different from those which compose every other. The emotions we feel towards a friend are the same in kind with those we experience on other occasions; but they are more complex and more exalted. It is the general sensibility to kind and social affections, more immediately directed to one or more individuals, and in consequence of its particular direction, giving birth to an order of feeling more vivid and intense than usual, which constitutes friendship. Hence we perceive the impropriety of making it the subject of legislation. It is the duty of every man to cultivate the dispositions which lead to friendship, the love of his species, admiration of virtue, regard to the feelings of others, gratitude, humility, along with the most inflexible adherence to probity and truth. Wherever these exist, friendship will be the natural result; but it will result as a felicity rather than as a duty; and is to be placed among the rewards of virtue rather than its obligations. Happiness is not to be prescribed, but to be enjoyed; and such is the benevolent arrangement of Divine Providence, that wherever there is a moral preparation for it, it follows of course; and such are the pleasures and advantages derived

from virtuous friendship. Its duties, supposing it to be formed, are deducible, with sufficient certainty and precision, from the light of nature and the precepts of scripture, and none more sacred; but in the act of forming it, the mind disdains the fetters of prescriptions, and is left to be determined by the impulse of feeling, and the operation of events.

Besides, were friendship inculcated as a matter of indispensable obligation, endless embarrassments would arise in determining at what period the relation shall commence; whether with one or with more; and at what stage, in the progress of mutual attraction, at what point, the feelings of reciprocal regard shall be deemed to reach the maturity which entitles them to the sacred name of friendship. The laws of virtue and piety are coeval with our existence, considered as reasonable and accountable creatures. Their authority is founded on immutable relations, the duties resulting from which are capable of being clearly conceived and exactly defined; but he who should undertake to prescribe to the subtle and mysterious impulses which invite susceptible minds to friendship, would find himself engaged in an attempt as hopeless, as to regulate the motions of the air which *bloweth where it listeth.*

But though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself under the general culture of reason and religion, it is

one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows, and the multiplier of our joys; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amidst the greatest crowd and pressure of society, is doomed to solitude; and however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power, and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend.

The sympathies even of virtuous minds, when not warmed by the breath of friendship, are too faint and cold to satisfy the social cravings of our nature; their compassion is too much dissipated by the multiplicity of its objects, and the varieties of distress, to suffer it to flow long in one channel; while the sentiments of congratulation are still more slight and superficial. A transient tear of pity, or a smile of complacency equally transient, is all we can usually bestow on the scenes of happiness or of misery which we meet with in the paths of life. But man naturally seeks for a closer union, a more permanent conjunction of interests, a more intense reciprocation of feeling; he finds the want of one or more with whom he can trust the secrets of his heart, and relieve himself by imparting the interior joys and sorrows with which every human breast is fraught. He seeks, in short,

another self, a kindred spirit, whose interest in his welfare bears some proportion to his own, with whom he may lessen his cares by sympathy, and multiply his pleasures by participation.

The satisfaction derived from surveying the most beautiful scenes of nature, or the most exquisite productions of art, is so far from being complete, that it almost turns into uneasiness, when there is none with whom we can share it; nor would the most passionate admirer of eloquence or poetry consent to witness their most stupendous exertions, upon the simple condition of not being permitted to reveal his emotions. So essential an ingredient in felicity is friendship, apart from the more solid and permanent advantages it procures, and when viewed in no other light than as the organ of communication, the channel of feeling and of thought. But if joy itself is a burden which the heart can ill sustain, without inviting others to partake of it, how much more the corrosions of anxiety, the perturbations of fear, and the dejection arising from sudden and overwhelming calamity?

But it is not merely as a source of pleasure, or as a relief from pain, that virtuous friendship is to be coveted; it is at least as much recommended by its utility. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathizing friend, may be said to have doubled his mental resources: by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind, with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of

discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to the judgement and assistance of one, who with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities, nor heated with the passions, which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragement of virtuous and enlightened friends afford the most powerful aid, in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty.

Wisdom indeed is not confined to any limited circle, much less to the very narrow one of private friendship, and sound advice may often be procured from those with whom we have contracted no ties of intimacy. But the patient attention required to comprehend and encounter all the peculiarities of the case; the persevering ardour, the persuasive sympathy, necessary to invest it with authority and to render it effectual, will be wanting; in the absence of which, the wisest counsel is a wintry and sickly beam, which plays on the surface only: it may enlighten, but will seldom penetrate or melt. The consciousness, too, of possessing a share in the esteem and affection of persons of distinguished worth is a powerful support to every virtuous resolution; it sheds a warm and cheerful light over the paths of life; fortifies the breast against unmanly dejection, and pusillanimous fears; while the apprehension of forfeiting these advantages, presents a strong

resistance to the encroachments of temptation. There are higher considerations, it is true, which ought invariably to produce the same effect; but we have no such superfluity of strength, as should induce us to decline the aid of inferior motives, when all are but barely adequate to the exigencies of our state. The recollection that we are acting under the eye of Omniscience will lose nothing of its force by being joined to the remembrance, that our conduct is subject to the scrutiny of friends, whose sentiments are in unison, whose influence coincides, with the voice of conscience and of God. And surely it must be no contemptible aid in the discharge of his duties, which he derives, who has invited the benevolent inspection of his actions, the honest reprehension of his errors, and the warm encouragement of his virtues; who, accustomed to lay open the interior of his character, and the most retired secrets of his heart, finds, in the approbation of his friend, the suffrage of his conscience reflected and confirmed; who delighted, but not elated, by the esteem he has secured and the confidence he has won, advances with renovated vigour in the paths that lead to glory, honour, and immortality. The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odours, though more faintly, through the seasons of absence; refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past, and the anticipation of the

future. It is a treasure possessed, when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

Friendship, founded on the principles of worldly morality, recognised by virtuous heathens, such as that which subsisted between Atticus and Cicero, which the last of these illustrious men has rendered immortal, is fitted to survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only to a union founded on religion, to continue through an endless duration. The former of these stood the shock of conflicting opinions, and of a revolution that shook the world; the latter is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. The former possessed all the stability which is possible to sublunary things; the latter partakes of the eternity of God. Friendship founded on worldly principles is *natural,* and, though composed of the best elements of nature, is not exempt from its mutability and frailty; the latter is *spiritual,* and therefore unchanging and imperishable. The friendship which is founded on kindred tastes and congenial habits, apart from piety, is permitted by the benignity of Providence to embellish a world, which, with all its magnificence and beauty, will shortly pass away; that which has religion for its basis, will ere long be transplanted, in order to adorn the paradise of God.

But it is time to turn our attention to the passage selected for our present meditations: *that disciple whom Jesus loved.* This is not the only instance in which the writer of this history designates himself under that character; whence we may with certainty infer, that the preference shown him by our Lord, above the other apostles, was so notorious, that the mention of it, even by the person on whom it was bestowed, could occasion no offence. He had recourse to it, without doubt, from a dictate of modesty, that he might avoid the disagreeable necessity of often speaking of himself under his proper name. It is natural to feel some curiosity respecting the character of one who was the object of so distinguished a preference. Are we to impute it to a decided superiority in intellectual and moral attainments? Perhaps not. The consideration of moral worth will always enter deeply into the motives which actuate wise and good men in their choice of friends; but it is far from constituting the only one. A certain congeniality of mind and manners, aided by the operation of adventitious circumstances, contributes a principal share towards the formation of such unions; nor is it presumption to conjecture that, in the instance before us, there was something in the taste and disposition of our Lord, considered as a man, more in unison with those of John, than with any of the other apostles. As every character has its peculiar mould, by which it is more or less distinguished, we may be allowed to suppose, that

in addition to the possession of unrivalled excellence in general, that of our Lord was marked by certain discriminating features. The virtues of Elijah, which reappeared in John the Baptist,—stern, awful, and majestic,—fitted to alarm a slumbering world by a denunciation of the wrath to come: how different the aspect they wear, from those of *the man of sorrows*, who wept at the grave of Lazarus! We follow the footsteps of this greatest of prophets with a reverence, bordering upon terror; while we behold, in the character of our Lord, though transcendently superior, such a meek and softened majesty, that we are not surprised that he who knew him best, delighted to designate him under the appellation of *the Lamb*. The distinguishing features of our Lord's character, viewed as a perfect human being, were, unquestionably, humility and love; nor is it less certain, or less obvious, that these were the qualities most conspicuous in the character of the beloved disciple.

This apostle presents a striking contrast to a certain class of writers, who, by no means deficient in talent, but possessing little sensibility, afford the reader little or no insight into their character. Their conceptions and their language are cast into a certain artificial mould, which leaves scarcely any traces of individuality. The writings of John are of the most contrary description; they are replete with traits of character; the writer presents his heart in almost every page. A tender sensibility pervades his gospel, sufficient to distinguish it from

either of the preceding; nor is it possible to believe, that the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the last scenes of our Saviour's life, were composed without tears. Such strokes of pathos, such touching simplicity, such minuteness of detail, without puerility or redundance, characterize the history of these extraordinary events, as could only have proceeded from one who felt himself a party concerned; who, with a most intimate acquaintance with his subject, wrote still more from his heart than from his head. He is little to be envied, who can peruse these inimitable narratives without being moved: the author places us in the very midst of the scenes he describes; we listen to the discourses, we imbibe the sentiments of the principal actors; and while he says nothing of himself, he lays open the whole interior of his character. We feel ourselves introduced, not so much to the acquaintance of an inspired apostle, as to that of the most amiable of men.

The selection of his materials is such as it were natural to expect from *the disciple whom Jesus loved;* for, while the other evangelists direct their chief attention to the miracles of our Lord, John relates his sentiments and discourses. The preceding evangelists content themselves, for the most part, with exhibiting his human history, in the record of those facts which established the truth of his doctrine, and the divinity of his mission; John commences from an earlier date, draws back the veil of eternity, and shews us the subject of his

history subsisting before all worlds, presiding in the work of creation and providence.

It is from this apostle we learn most fully the state of the controversy between our Lord and the unbelieving Jews; in the course of which, we have continual occasion to admire the quickness and dexterity, the subtlety and profundity, displayed in various discourses, which, but for him, would have been lost in oblivion. He expatiates with peculiar interest on the last interview between Christ and his disciples; where he assures them of his unalterable attachment, and exerts himself to console their grief, to reanimate their confidence, and dispel their fears, by the prospect of seeing them again, when their joy should be such as *no man should take from them.* He either entirely omits, or passes rapidly over, the transactions recorded by the other evangelists; but when he approaches the scene of the crucifixion, he lingers, and dwells upon the circumstances of that awful tragedy with a minuteness and particularity of detail, as though it had never been recorded before.

In the short epistles inscribed with his name, the topic on which he chiefly insists is LOVE, which, in its sublimer form, constitutes the moral essence of the Deity, as well as the very sum and substance of true religion. His heart was in perfect unison with his subject. Written, as is supposed, at a very advanced age, the spirit they breathe is that of a father inculcating on his children the cultivation of every virtue, and especially of mutual

affection, with that neglect of order and arrangement, and those reiterations and overflowings of tender importunity, which are suited to such a character. Instead of assuming an air of superiority, in his first epistle he suppresses his name; and in the two last, takes to himself a title common to every christian pastor. He is not satisfied with styling his converts children; he styles them little children. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols;* which reminds me of a beautiful anecdote related by Eusebius, that when he was too much oppressed with infirmity to permit him to exercise his public ministry any longer, he was accustomed to be carried into the church; and after stretching forth his feeble arms, and crying, *Little children, love one another,* to retire from the assembly. So deeply was he imbued with the seraphic love of the bosom on which he leaned, that it remained unimpaired, amidst the decays of nature, and the eclipse of intellect.

In the early part of his life, if we may judge from a single incident, from his proposing to call down fire from heaven to avenge the insult offered to our Lord, he possessed an impetuous and eager spirit, not always restrained by *the wisdom that is from above;* but in maturer years it appears to have subsided, and given place to none but benign affections. His meekness and tenderness, however, were never indulged at the expense of truth, his adherence to which was inviolable; nor did he fail to express the utmost abhorrence at any

attempt to corrupt it; insomuch that I can easily believe another anecdote related by Eusebius, that, on his entering a public bath, and finding the notorious heresiarch Cerinthus there, he left it with precipitation, exclaiming, "Let us flee from this place, lest it fall and crush that enemy of God!" His benevolence spent itself, not in a hollow and unmeaning complaisance to the impugners of the gospel, but in efforts to convert them; and just in proportion as he loved his fellow-creatures, was his anxiety to preserve, unimpaired, and unmixed, the doctrine by which they were to be saved.

But enough has been said on the character of this eminent apostle. Before we dismiss this branch of our subject, it will be proper to advert to a few indications of the preference with which he was honoured. On perusing the evangelists, it appears, that he was invariably selected by our Lord as one of the three, who were present in the most retired scenes of his life, on the mount of transfiguration, in the house of Jairus, and in the garden of Gethsemane. Whoever else were absent, John was sure to share his most confidential moments, and to witness his most secret joys and conflicts. At the paschal supper, to which he looked forward with so much eagerness, as the appointed season for a more unreserved disclosure of his purposes than he had made before, he placed John next to himself, in such a manner, that his head naturally rested on his bosom. Through him it was that the rest of the disciples applied to

our Lord to be informed who it was that should betray him. But the most decisive evidence of the preference bestowed upon John, arises from his being chosen to take care of his widowed mother after his decease. The circumstance is related with inimitable simplicity and beauty. No sooner was our Saviour elevated on the cross, than he sees his mother standing by, along with *the disciple whom he loved:* to the mother he said, *Behold thy son;* to John, *Behold thy mother: and from that moment John took her to his own house.* What a rebuke to that proud and false philosophy, which pretends to extinguish the feelings of nature, and to erect its trophies on the ruins of humanity! By committing to the beloved disciple so precious a deposit, he gave him a stronger demonstration of his esteem, than by a whole volume of panegyric.

After the resurrection and ascension, he continued to receive from his Saviour similar proofs of his preference. Preserved amidst a violent and bloody persecution, he was permitted (such is the universal tradition of the church) to survive the rest of the apostles, to witness, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its inhabitants, the fulfilment of his own predictions, and, finally, to close a life extended to an extreme old age in peace, and in the bosom of his friends. Nor was this the only distinction he enjoyed. To him it was given to convey to the churches of Asia among whom he dwelt, repeated messages from his ascended Lord, to behold his glory, and to

catch the last accents of inspiration. To him it was given, not only to record the life of the Saviour, in common with the other evangelists; but to transmit to future ages the principal events and vicissitudes which shall befall the church to the end of time, in a series of visions, which revived the spirit and manner, and more than equalled the sublimity, of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a genius equally simple and sublime, he mingles with ease among the worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendours of the celestial temple with an eye that never blenched. The place which he occupies in the order and succession of inspired men, must at the same time ensure to him a high distinction; for while Moses leads the way, John brings up the rear of that illustrious company.

To the selection of the passage to which your attention is directed, I was led by an irresistible impulse the moment I heard of the melancholy event which has deprived you of your beloved pastor. It appeared to me peculiarly applicable to his character, nor am I apprehensive of encountering contradiction, when I affirm, that among his numerous acquaintance, an entire unanimity will be felt on this subject. It will be readily confessed, that his piety was of the same mould and complexion with that which distinguished the beloved disciple. In the attempt I shall make to delineate his character, let me not be suspected of

the presumption of attempting to impart any information to *you*, on whose minds his virtues have made that indelible impression which is far above the power of words. It is solely for the use of those who were placed beyond the influence of his example and the benefit of his instructions, that it appears to me not improper to exhibit some of the more conspicuous features which contributed to render him so eminent a pattern of christian excellence.

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavour to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory, and transmit through the shades of the sepulchre some reflection, however faint, of its living lustre. By enlarging the cloud of witnesses by which we are encompassed, it is calculated to give a fresh impulse to the desire of imitation; and even the despair of reaching it is not without its use, by checking the levity, and correcting the pride and presumption of the human heart.

Doctor Ryland was born January 29, 1753, at Warwick, where his venerable father exercised his ministry for some years; from whence he removed to Northampton.

The most remarkable particular recorded of his infancy, is his early progress in the Hebrew language, which was such, that he read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible to the celebrated Hervey,

when he was only five years old. About his thirteenth year, he became deeply impressed with religious concern; and without any thing very singular in his experience, his convictions ripened into genuine conversion, and he was baptized on a profession of his faith in his fourteenth year. At the request of the church he began to exercise his ministerial gifts in his seventeenth year; and after continuing to assist his father for some years, he was ordained co-pastor with him in the year 1781. In this situation he remained for some time; when, on his father's removal from Northampton, he became sole pastor, until the year 1793, when he received a unanimous invitation to the joint offices of president of the Bristol Education Society, and pastor of Broadmead. How he conducted himself in the first scene of his labours, many living witnesses can attest; suffice it to say, that his ministry during that period was eminently acceptable and useful. During his residence at Northampton, he was *in labours more abundant;* far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages; and though, on his removal to Bristol, his numerous avocations rendered his ministerial exertions less frequent, he may justly be considered, on the whole, as one of the most laborious of pastors. He preached, during his whole career, not less than eight thousand six hundred and ninety-one sermons, and at two hundred and eighty-six distinct places.

If, as a preacher, he never attained the highest summit of popularity, he was always heard with attention. His ministry was replete with instruction, and not unfrequently accompanied with an unction which rendered it irresistible. As he possessed none of those graces of elocution and manner which secure superficial applause, he was always most esteemed by those who heard him the oftenest; and his stated hearers rarely, if ever, wished to exchange the voice of their pastor for that of a stranger. His address was such as produced an instantaneous conviction of his sincerity. It displayed, even to the most superficial observer, a mind infinitely above being actuated by the lust of applause; a spirit deeply imbued with a sense of eternal realities, and ready to pour itself forth as a libation on the sacrifice of the faith and obedience of his converts. The effect of his discourses, excellent as they were in themselves, was prodigiously heightened by the veneration universally felt for his character, and the just and high estimation entertained of his piety. Piety, indeed, was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably beyond the level of ordinary christians. Devotion appeared to be the principal element of his being: it was next to impossible to converse with him without perceiving how entirely it pervaded his mind, and imparted to his whole deportment an air of purity, innocence, and sanctity, difficult for words to express. His piety did not

display itself in a profusion of religious discourse, nor in frequently alluding to the interior exercises of his mind on spiritual subjects. He was seldom known to speak of his religious joys or sorrows: his devotional feelings were too deep and too sacred to suffer themselves to evaporate in ordinary conversation. His religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil. As little did his character partake of the ascetic. It never entered into his thoughts that religion was an enemy to the innocent pleasures and social endearments of human life, of which he entertained a high relish, and which his constant regard to the Deity rendered subservient to piety, by the gratitude which they inspired, and the conviction which they deepened of the divine benignity. His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity: it was an awful love, such as the beatific vision may be supposed to inspire, where the worshippers veil their faces in that presence in which they rejoice with ecstatic joy. As he cherished a firm persuasion that the attributes of the Deity ensure the production of the greatest possible sum of good, in comparison of which the quantity of natural and moral evil permitted to remain, vanishes and disappears, his views of the divine administration were a source of unmingled joy; while his profound sense of the essential

holiness and justice of the Supreme Ruler, kept alive those sentiments of penitence and humility to which too many *optimists* are strangers. *He feared the great and terrible name of the Lord his God.*

Humility was, in fact, the most remarkable feature of his character. It was depicted on his countenance, his manners, his language; it pervaded almost every thing he said or did. He might most truly be said, in the language of scripture, to be *clothed* with it. The mode in which it operated was at the utmost remove from the shallow expedients adopted by those who vainly attempt to secure the praise of that quality, without possessing it. It neither prompted him to depreciate his talents, nor to disclaim his virtues; to speak in debasing terms of himself, nor to exaggerate his imperfections and failings. It taught him the rarer art of forgetting himself. His readiness to take the lowest place, could only be exceeded by the eagerness of all who knew him to assign him the highest; and this was the only competition which the distinctions of life ever cost him. His modesty was such, that the praises he was most solicitous to merit he blushed to receive; and never appeared so disconcerted and embarrassed, as when he was necessitated to hear his own commendations. Hence it will be easily inferred, that he was completely exempt from the jealousy of superior talent or reputation; that it gave him not a moment's uneasiness to find himself eclipsed,

and that he was the ardent admirer and panegyrist of the mental endowments in which he was most deficient. Though he had neglected to cultivate the powers of his imagination, and was little distinguished for the graces of style, no one was ever more disposed to admire them wherever they were conspicuous. The candour and benignity of his mind prepared him to embrace every kind of intellectual superiority, to rejoice in every display of talent, devoted to the interest of religion; and to derive exquisite gratification from the operation of those qualities and powers, to which he made the least pretensions. His enjoyment of intellectual repast, was not impaired by the consciousness of not having contributed to furnish it: and his virtue was thus his own reward, by enabling him to reap the harvest, where he neither sowed the seed, nor prepared the soil.

If any man ever practised the gentleness of Jesus Christ, it was certainly our lamented friend. Possessed of a temper naturally quick and irritable, he had, by the aid of reason and religion, so far subdued that propensity, that it was rarely suffered to appear; and when it did, it was a momentary agitation which quickly subsided into kindness and benignity. His sensibility was exquisite. There were a numerous class of subjects to which he could rarely advert without tears. The bare recurrence to his mind of the great objects of religion, was sufficient to produce a gush of tenderness; so entirely was his heart softened, that

it might be truly styled *a heart of flesh.* Nor was his sensibility confined to religion. It pervaded the whole system of his life, producing a quick and powerful sympathy; not only with his own species, but with the whole circle of animated nature, the properties of which he took great delight in investigating, and in tracing the exquisite contrivance of its benevolent Author for its preservation and enjoyment.

His extreme susceptibility of feeling, combined with his gentleness and timidity, necessarily exposed him to be wounded whenever he encountered harsh and unfeeling manners; and from the same cause, he was liable to be hurt by every symptom of unkindness, even where none was intended. His sensitive mind was impressed with every variety of temper in those with whom he conversed; and if his peace was less frequently invaded from this quarter than might have been expected, it is to be ascribed to that reverence which his character so universally inspired. It seemed a sort of sacrilege to trespass upon so much innocence and piety.

And here I cannot but remark, that, though religion in its ordinary mode of exhibition commands but little respect; when it rises to the sublime, and is perceived to tincture and pervade the whole character, it seldom fails to draw forth the homage of mankind. The most hardened impiety and daring profligacy will find it difficult to despise the man who manifestly appears to

walk with God, whose whole system of life is evidently influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come. The ridicule cast on religious characters, is not always directed towards their religion, but more often perhaps to the little it performs, contrasted with the loftiness of its pretensions; a ridicule which derives its force from the very sublimity of the principles which the profession of piety assumes. It may be doubted whether the character of Dr. Ryland provoked, on any occasion, the sneer of the infidel, or the scorn of the ungodly.

The opportunities of making great sacrifices for the good of mankind, are of rare occurrence, and he who remains inactive till it is in his power to confer signal benefits, or yield important services, is in imminent danger of incurring the doom of the slothful servant. It is the preference of duty to inclination, in the ordinary course of life, it is the practice of self-denial in a thousand little instances, which forms the truest test of character, and secures the honour and the reward of those who *live not to themselves.* Viewed in this light, our lamented friend presented a pattern of christian virtue, rarely if ever surpassed. His whole life was a series of acts of self-denial; his conduct appeared invariably to proceed from the impulse of benevolence and the sense of duty; and though not exempt from the errors and imperfections incident to the present state, his *eye was always single,* his intentions always upright. If the

essence of christian perfection consists in a sole and supreme desire to do the will of God, he probably made as near an approach to it, as is attainable in the present state; though he not only never pretended to it, but held all such pretensions in abhorrence.

Justice to his memory will not permit me to suppress the mention of that strict and inviolable regard to truth which he preserved in all his words and actions. He would never allow himself to employ those exaggerations and colours in the narration of facts, which many who would shudder at a deliberate falsehood freely indulge; some for the gratification of their passions, or the advancement of their interests, and others purely from the impulse of vanity, and a wish to render their narratives more striking, and their conversation more poignant. Whatever Dr. Ryland affirmed was, as far as his knowledge extended, as certain as an identical proposition; nor was he satisfied with the substantial truth of what he asserted; he was so anxious that the impression he conveyed should exactly coincide, as well in its degree, as in kind, with his internal conviction, that, if it be possible, he was too tenacious of truth, and may be said to have carried his scrupulosity too far. I have often been amused at observing the compass he would fetch, and the circumlocutions he would have recourse to, in the narration of facts, rather than incur the possibility of misrepresentation or mistake.

Few men have exhibited more unequivocal proofs of candour than your excellent and lamented pastor. Though a Calvinist, in the strictest sense of the word, and attached to its peculiarities in a higher degree than most of the advocates of that system, he extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views. No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him; an abhorrence of error, with the kindest feelings towards the erroneous. He detested the spirit of monopoly in religion, and opposed every tendency to circumscribe it by the limits of party. His treatise on Baptism furnishes a beautiful specimen of the manner in which religious controversy should be conducted on a subject on which the combatants on both sides have frequently disgraced themselves by an acrimony and bitterness, in an inverse proportion to the importance of the point in debate. How extraordinary is it, that they who differ only on one subject, and that, confessedly of secondary moment, should have contended with more fierceness than has usually been displayed in a contest *pro aris et focis,* for all that is dear and important in christianity! Is it that their near approach as religious denominations, exposes them more to the spirit of rivalry, as adjoining kingdoms are the

most hostile to each other, or that it is the property of bigotry to acquire an additional degree of malignity by being concentrated on one point, and directed to one object? Whatever the cause may be, the fact is singular and greatly to be lamented. He whose removal from us we so deeply regret, was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, to expose him to that snare; his love of good men of every nation, sect, and party, was fervent and disinterested, nor was it confined to the bounds of his personal knowledge; it engaged him in a most affectionate and extensive correspondence with eminent persons in remote quarters of the globe, whose faces he never saw; so signally was he prepared for sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, where the whole assembly of the church of the first-born will be convened before the throne of God and the Lamb.

In addition to his other excellencies, none, who were honoured with his intimacy, will fail to recollect his diligence in the improvement of time, of the value of which he entertained too deep a sense, to allow any part of it to run to waste. By the practice of early rising, and a most exact distribution of his hours to their respective employments, he contrived to husband a treasure, which no one is permitted to squander without severely repenting it, though that repentance may possibly arrive too late. Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of

time to a religious regulation, he *worked out his salvation with fear and trembling*. From taste, as well as from principle, he was warmly attached to order and method, which he extended to the minutest particulars. Thus the transactions of his whole life lay before him, by looking back on the turns and vicissitudes of which, he was accumulating fresh materials for gratitude, and acquiring new lessons of prudence and piety.

That with all this varied excellence he united some imperfections, will be readily allowed; at the same time it is but justice to remark, that they were in the strictest sense of the word *imperfections*, since they grew out of his natural temperament, and were not to be imputed to an obliquity of will, or to a deficiency in the strength of his moral principle. The most conspicuous of these was a certain timidity of spirit, a proneness to augur danger where none existed, which, from an excessive apprehension of doing evil, sometimes arrested his power of doing good. His caution was extreme, and his natural aversion to bold and hazardous measures, on some occasions, enervated his resolutions, and crippled his efforts. Alive to the possible inconvenience resulting from an unnecessary disclosure of his views, he narrowed his confidence too much, lost the advantage of that assistance and cooperation which he might easily have commanded, and in some of the most trying exigencies of his life, doomed himself to walk alone. It must be also acknowledged by his

warmest admirers, that he was deficient in the spirit of authority, that he wanted the power of asserting his rights, of repressing the encroachments of petulance, and of sustaining his pretensions to rule. The extreme gentleness of his character was such, that it left him too much to the mercy of those who were conscious they might abuse it, without danger of incurring his resentment. He not only carried with him no *offensive*, but he had no *defensive*, armour. This want of force and energy of character, which was his chief imperfection, was not, there is reason to believe, entirely natural, but to be ascribed, in a great measure, to an injudicious mode of treatment in early life, and to some severe trials in the commencement of his career, which pressed with such force on his mind, that it never entirely recovered its elasticity. He witnessed in his excellent father an excess of vehemence, a careless intrepidity of temper, that, with the most upright intentions, involved him in so much distress, that his anxiety to avoid that extreme betrayed him into a contrary one. The grand maxim which he seems to have adopted for the regulation of his life, was a determination to shun every approach to what he had seen productive of so much inconvenience, forgetting, perhaps, too much, that the opposite to that which is wrong, is not always right. Hence the fear of consequences predominated too much in his course of action, and he was more easily deterred by the apprehension of possible evil, than

incited to action by the prospect of good. In the words of an ingenious writer, employed on a different occasion, "*there was nothing he needed to be cautioned against, so much as caution itself.*"*

I am aware there are those who have charged our excellent friend with a want of openness of character. As far as such an imputation has any colour of truth, it is but just to remark, that the deficiency complained of was in no degree tinctured with dissimulation or cunning. It was partly the effect of that timidity which he was acknowledged to possess, partly of that gentleness which shrunk with an instinctive recoil from contention, and which disposed him, however his feelings might be wounded, to breathe out his complaints in the ear of friendship, rather than demand such an explanation or apology as might have restored confidence, and prevented a repetition of the offence. He repressed his anger, but indulged his grief; and was accustomed on such occasions to conduct himself rather like a person wounded than offended. Thus the uneasy sensations with which his mind was fraught were allowed to accumulate, producing not malignity indeed or rancour, of which he was incapable, but permanent disgust. *Be ye angry,* saith the Scripture, *and sin not.* A violent suppression of the natural feelings is not the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects, and

* See Morris's "Life of Fuller," a work which contains a most able and accurate delineation of the character of that extraordinary man.

though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotions of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive, is, perhaps, best evaporated by its natural and temperate expression: not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society.

Such, and such only, as it appears to me, was the origin of that reserve, which forms the most plausible objection to his character, and which, when closely investigated, will be considered more as an infelicity than a fault. That it contributed to render him less influential, less powerful, and totally disqualified him to be the head of a party, will be readily admitted, but it may be doubted whether it rendered him much less amiable. The worst effect of it was, that it sometimes imparted to his conduct the semblance of disingenuous concealment, while he was in reality an example of artless simplicity. For the liberty I have assumed of alluding to the imperfections of our lamented friend, my only apology is, that unqualified praise is entitled to little credit, and that the failings which attach to the character of the best of men are often as instructive as their virtues.

It may be expected that something should be said of his literary character and attainments, a circumstance not to be neglected, in speaking of the president of a theological institute. My knowledge, however, on this head, is too limited to allow me to say more, than that he was a scholar from

his infancy, that his attainments in the Hebrew language were profound, that he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science, and that his reading was various and extensive. As he was extremely addicted to study and meditation, so his mental opulence was much greater than his modesty would permit him to reveal; his disposition to conceal his attainments being nearly as strong as that of some men to display them.

He had a passion for natural history, in the pursuit of which he was much assisted by the peculiar structure of his eyes, which were a kind of natural microscopes. The observations he made on various natural productions, without the aid of instruments, were really surprising; and though the peculiarity in his visual organs deprived him of the pleasure of contemplating the sublime and magnificent features of nature, it gave him a singular advantage for tracing her minuter operations.

But the science in which he most delighted, and to which he bent the full force of his mind, was theology: not that theology which is built on human speculation, and supported by scholastic subtleties, but that knowledge of God, and of the mysteries of his will, which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. By the incessant study of the Scriptures, your pastor became a *scribe well instructed for the kingdom of God, and, like a wise householder, was enabled to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old.* The system of divinity to which he adhered was moderate Calvinism, as modelled and

explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards. For the writings of this great man, and those of his followers, he formed a warm predilection very early, which continued ever after to exert a powerful influence on his public ministry, as well as his theological inquiries and pursuits. It inspired him with the most elevated conceptions of the moral character of the Deity, to the display of which it taught him to refer the whole economy of providence and of grace, while he inculcated the indispensable duty of loving God, not merely for the benefits he bestows, but for what he is in himself, as essential to true religion. Hence, he held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in *self*. Whether he attached an undue importance to these speculations, and rendered them occasionally too prominent in his public ministrations, it is not for me to determine; it is certain that they effectually secured him from the slightest tendency to Antinomianism, and contributed not a little to give purity and elevation to his religious views. The two extremes against which you are well aware he was most solicitous to guard the religious public, were, Pelagian pride, and Antinomian licentiousness; the first of which he detested as an insult on the grace of the gospel; the last, on the majesty and authority of the law.

By the removal of a minister of Christ, so able, so disinterested, so devoted, you have sustained

a loss, the magnitude of which it is difficult to appreciate, much more to repair. A successor you may easily procure, but where will you find one who will so *naturally care for your state?* who, *instant in season and out of season, is willing to impart to you not only the gospel, but his own soul also, because ye are dear unto him?* You may hear the same truths from other lips, supported by illustrations and arguments equally clear and cogent; the same duties inculcated by similar motives; but where will you find them enforced and recommended by an example equally elevated, an affection equally tender? Where will you look for another, whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety but what you are conscious he has himself attained? When you add to this the effect of a residence among you of above thirty years, during which he became the confidential friend of your parents, the guide of your youth, and after witnessing the removal of one generation to a better world, was the honoured instrument of raising up another in their room; when you reflect on the continued emanations of wisdom and piety which proceeded for so long a space from this burning and shining light, you must be convinced that your loss is irreparable.*

* The church wisely sought for a successor to their excellent pastor in the author of this discourse, who removed from Leicester to Bristol in the spring of 1826; but whose admirable labours there were terminated by death within five years.—Ed.

The removal of such a pastor, of one whose labours you have so long enjoyed, is an epoch in the history of a church. It is an event which no living generation can witness more than once; and it surely calls upon you to consider what improvement you have made of such advantages, and what is the prospect that awaits you, in the final day of account, when you and your pastor shall meet once more in the presence of the Judge; he to give an account of his ministry, you of its effect on your character. In relation to him, the event is not doubtful. *He has finished his course, he has kept the faith; henceforth there remains for him a crown of righteousness, which Christ the righteous judge will give him on that day.* Would to God the issue were equally certain and equally happy on the part of those, who so long enjoyed the benefit of such a ministry! That such will be the issue with respect to many who compose this auditory, we cannot doubt; and with what inconceivable joy will he witness the felicity which awaits them, while he presents them before the throne, saying, *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me!* With what delight will they renew the intercourse which death had interrupted, and retrace together the steps of their mysterious pilgrimage! while the gratitude they will experience towards him who was instrumental in conducting them thither, will be only inferior to that which they will feel to God and the Lamb. How trivial will every other distinction then appear, compared to

the honour of having turned many to righteousness! of having sown that seed which shall be reaped in life everlasting! A large portion of this felicity will, we cannot doubt, accrue to your pastor, from those who are accustomed to assemble within these walls; but should it in any instance be otherwise, should the event be of a contrary nature, he *will be a sweet smelling savour to God,* even *in them that perish.* His happiness will be unimpaired, his reward undiminished, and the feelings with which he was wont to contemplate such a catastrophe will give place to sentiments of a higher order. The tears which he here wept over souls in danger of perishing will be shed no more; all his agitation and anxiety, on their account, will be laid to rest; nor will they who refused to constitute his joy by their conversion, be suffered to mar his felicity by their destruction.

It is not the church and congregation only, over which he presided with so much honour, that feels itself interested in this event. The sensation which it has produced is widely extended, and has reached every part of this great and populous city; a city sufficiently enlightened to comprehend his worth, and to mourn his loss. When a Reynolds, whose munificence flowed in a thousand channels, and whose example gave a new impulse to the public mind, quitted the scene which he had so long adorned with his presence, and enriched with his bounty, that a general sensation should be excited, is no more than might be expected. But that the

removal of a christian minister, who possessed none of these advantages, should produce a regret so universal and so deep, is a pleasing homage to the majesty of religion; a practical demonstration of the power it exerts over the consciences of men. If blessings are bestowed and judgements averted in answer to prayer, as the Scripture every where teaches, and the efficacy of prayer is proportioned to the fervour of faith and the perfection of obedience, it is impossible to say how much the inhabitants of this place may be indebted to our excellent friend, by whose removal they have lost a powerful intercessor with God!

By an extensive circle of ministers and churches, who shared his friendship, and on various occasions enjoyed his labours, his loss will be deeply lamented, and not without reason; for, though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison with him, in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God.

That denomination of Christians, of which he was so long a distinguished ornament, will especially lay this providence to heart. Our hands are weakened this day; and if the glory is not departed from us, it is at least eclipsed and obscured. We have been visited with stroke upon stroke. Our brightest lights have been successively extinguished; and in vain do we look around for a Beddome, a Booth, a Fuller, or a Ryland; names

which would have given lustre to any denomination, and were long the glory of ours. Your pastor was endeared to us, as one of the last links of the chain which connected the present generation with the founders of the Baptist Mission. From the very beginning, he mingled his counsels and his prayers with that determined band, who, in the absence of all human resources, resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe; nor did he cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with parental solicitude. The intimate friendship which subsisted between that lovely triumvirate, Fuller, Ryland, and Sutcliff, which never suffered a moment's interruption or abatement, was cemented by their common attachment to that object. Of congenial sentiments and taste, though of very different temperament and character, there was scarce a thought which they did not communicate to each other, while they united all their energies in supporting the same cause; nor is it easy to determine whether the success of our mission is most to be ascribed to the vigour of Fuller, the prudence of Sutcliff, or the piety of Ryland. Is it presumption to suppose, they still turn their attention to that object? that they bend their eyes on the plains of Hindostan, and sympathize with the toils of Carey and of his associates, content to postpone the pleasure which awaits them on his arrival, while they behold the steady though gradual progress of light, and see, at no great distance, the idol temples fallen, the

vedas and shasters consigned to oblivion, the cruel rites of a degrading superstition abhorred and abandoned, and *the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ?*

But by none will the removal of our excellent friend be more deeply felt than by our missionaries in India, and especially by the venerable Carey, whom he was the means of introducing into the ministry; a circumstance which he sometimes mentioned with honest triumph, after witnessing the career of that extraordinary man, who, from the lowest poverty and obscurity, without assistance, rose by dint of unrelenting industry to the highest honours of literature, became one of the first of orientalists, the first of missionaries, and the instrument of diffusing more religious knowledge among his contemporaries, than has fallen to the lot of any individual since the Reformation; a man who unites, with the most profound and varied attainments, the fervour of an evangelist, the piety of a saint, and the simplicity of a child. His chief consolation, on receiving the melancholy tidings, will undoubtedly arise from the prospect of soon meeting in a better world, where those who have been fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears will be associated in the presence of the Saviour, never more to part.

If the mere conception of the reunion of good men, in a future state, infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully; if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his

convictions, could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel, who are assured of such an event by *the true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, " with every tear wiped from their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, *in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God, that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat, and the labour of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!

To that state all the pious on earth are tending; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another, not less certain or less powerful, which conducts their spirits to the abodes of bliss, to the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; every thing presses on towards eternity; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean.

Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while every thing which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world, to adorn that eternal city *which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Let us obey the voice that calls us thither; let us *seek the things that are above,* and no longer cleave to a world which must shortly perish, and which we must shortly quit, while we neglect to prepare for that in which we are invited to dwell for ever. Let us follow in the track of those holy men, who, together with your beloved and faithful pastor, have taught us by their voice, and encouraged us by their example, *that, laying aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets us, we may run with patience the race that is set before us.* While every thing within us and around us reminds us of the approach of death, and concurs to teach us that this is not our rest, let us hasten our preparations for another world, and earnestly implore that grace, which alone can put an end to that fatal war which our desires have too long waged with our destiny. When these move in the same direction, and that which the will of heaven renders unavoidable shall

become our choice, all things will be ours; life will be divested of its vanity, and death disarmed of its terrors. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.*

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS & MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Western Association.

[Written in 1787.]

THE EXCELLENCY

OF

THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Dear Brethren,

We are happy to be able to address you on the present occasion. We have many and great thanks to render to our common God and Father, for preserving us through another year, and permitting us once more to assemble ourselves together. We have too often experienced your candour and good will to doubt of your bearing with us, whilst we exhort you with all earnestness and sincerity.

You will remember, brethren, the dignity of the dispensation under which you live; that it is not the institution of man, but the wise and gracious plan of God to make you happy. With this view he raised up the people of the Jews, kept them distinct from all others, and gave them such a portion of knowledge as might, in due time, prepare for the display of the gospel. With this view, a succession of priests was kept up, the eye of prophecy was enlightened, and the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth. After thus preparing the

way, our great Redeemer himself appeared upon the earth, lived in humiliation and sorrow, and died in agony and disgrace. During the time of his personal ministry, he had every attestation of Deity in his favour, and the power of God was often exerted in a most signal manner. After his ascension, a larger measure of knowledge and power was given to his disciples than had been afforded them before. They asserted his character, and affirmed that he had risen from the dead, in the very place in which he had been crucified. They were endued with a miraculous skill in tongues, for the very purpose of spreading the gospel through the different parts of the world; and with what success they did it, and how, in the face of danger and of death, they maintained their cause, whilst many of them perished in their sufferings, is well known, and will draw tears of admiration and gratitude from all succeeding ages.

When we see the Saviour descending from heaven as a witness for God, and behold his sufferings and death, we cannot help being astonished at so stupendous a scene, and inquiring into the purpose it was intended to accomplish. One, among many other great ends which are answered by it, is the removing the ignorance and error in which we are by nature involved, and giving us the knowledge of God, and our true happiness. If there be a moral Governor of the world, it must be of great importance to know upon what terms we stand with him, and what expectations we may

form from him. A sober, reflecting man could scarcely feel himself at ease, till he attained to some certainty in points of so much consequence; and yet how little information we can derive from reason in inquiries of this nature, may be seen from the experience of past ages, and those the most enlightened and refined; which, after all their researches, have not been able to come to any agreement, or to gain any satisfaction. We may discover, by the light of nature, the existence of a being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom, and power; but with respect to the application of these, in any particular instance, it leaves us entirely at a loss. We have no measure which we can apply to the operations of an infinite mind; and, therefore, though we may be assured that the Divine Being possesses all the attributes which compose supreme excellence, it is impossible for us to say, in particular instances, what path of conduct may best consist with those perfections, in their most extensive operation. Indeed, to discover not only the leading attributes of the Divine Nature, but to be acquainted beforehand with every direction they will take, would be fully to comprehend the Most High. When, therefore, without the aid of revelation, we attempt to foretell the dispensations of the Almighty, we are lost in a maze, and are obliged to rest in vague and uncertain conjectures. This holds true, more especially, when applied to the conduct of Providence with

respect to only a small part of creation. In this case our uncertainty is doubled, since we know that all the works of God form one vast system, and that the regulation of the parts must be subservient to the administration of the whole. But this situation is ours. Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem fit to Divine Providence to dispose of us, in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on. Our meaning may be illustrated by the following instance:—It is certain that the Divine Being is, in the greatest degree, compassionate and good; but, if a number of creatures render themselves unhappy by a wilful rebellion against him, a singular instance would arise. It would be impossible to say whether the exercise of compassion *here* would best comport with the highest goodness, and the greatest happiness, in the general administration of Providence, because no one could trace every relation which the parts bear to the whole.

This you will perceive is a case entirely to the point; for disorder and sin *have* entered into the world. It is evident, things are turned out of their natural and original channel—that they are not what they *have* been, nor what they *ought* to be. Men have corrupted their way. A change so singular in the creation—a situation so striking, and so little to be apprehended under the government of a holy and perfect Being, naturally leads

us to look for a revolution in the dispensations of Providence. In such a state, some new and awful interposition of the Divine hand might well be expected. There is something, at the same time, in the idea of having provoked the displeasure of God, when seriously thought of, too heavy for the heart of man to bear. We cannot leave his presence, we cannot resist his power, we cannot evade his stroke. Hence mankind, in all ages, have had their fears awakened, and have taken a gloomy survey of an hereafter. They saw death busy around them, carrying their fellow-creatures out of their sight. Anxious and fearful for themselves, they sought for them in the dreams of poetic illusion, and followed them in the gloomy visions of unenlightened fancy. They found that life was filled with vanity and sorrow; they knew not but death would extinguish their existence, or transmit them to still greater misery. They had just light enough dimly to shew them the Judge of the universe seated on his throne, in wrath, clouded with darkness, and beset with judgements. They had no certain access to him—no acceptable worship to pay him—no assurance that their prayers would be answered, or their sins forgiven them. They saw not the issue of things, nor could they take any lengthened view of futurity. They knew not, therefore, how to cherish any great hopes, to form any high and extensive plans; they were confined to the present moment, and all beyond it was covered with confusion and horror. You

will not, my brethren, think this description overwrought, if you read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Herein, then, appears the supreme excellence of the christian dispensation. In the midst of this darkness, it rises like the sun in its strength, and all these gloomy shades melt away, and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of his Father from eternity, who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works. It raises no hopes within, but what are built upon the promise and oath of Him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion; whilst, at the same moment, the law of God received more honour than it could have done by the obedience and death of any, or of all his creatures. *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* In this dispensation of his grace, he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that, if we love him, we may be assured that he will freely with it give us all things. Access to God is now opened at all times, and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it, he has

promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it just for him to forgive sin; and whenever we are led to repent of, and to forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in the pardon of it. Dear brethren, consolation pours itself in on every side, whilst we contemplate the gospel, and refreshes our inmost souls. It gives us the prospect of our sins being pardoned—our prayers accepted—our very afflictions turned into blessings—and our existence prolonged to an endless duration. We see christianity indeed, as yet, but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present it is but as *a grain of mustard-seed,* and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop; but, be assured, it is of God's own right-hand planting, and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the river, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it; the hungry will partake of its fruits; and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

You, dear brethren, who profess the name of Jesus, will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom, and your expectations will not deceive you. *He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age, or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move and

to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessings will descend, and its influence will be felt, to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects, and the accomplishment of its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth as the Judge and Ruler of it; will send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds; will abolish sin, and death, and hell, and will place the righteous for ever in the presence of his God and their God, of his Father and their Father. If such be our religion, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? You are conscious that a mere belief of the christian revelation will not purify the heart, or regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of christianity, and afterwards suffer them to slide out of our minds, without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back upon the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects than by their weight and importance; and that habit has more force in forming our characters than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is that the world, by continually pressing upon our senses, and being

ever open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart. How think you, dear brethren, must we correct this influence, and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity? Let us beseech you then, to make them familiar with your minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of your thoughts: retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and your own souls. In these solemn moments, nature, and the shifting scenes of it, will retire from your view, and you will feel yourselves left alone with God; you will walk as in his sight; you will stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour. You will estimate human life, and the worth of it, not by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. You will see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter; its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantment be dissolved. It is much, however, if faith do not, upon such occasions, draw aside the veil which rests on futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men, and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes! They have entered already the rest which remained for them; they have *come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to God, the Judge of all.* From these seasons of retirement and religious

meditation, you will return to the active scenes of life with greater advantage. From the presence of God you will come forth with your passions more composed, your thoughts better regulated, and your heart more steady and pure. Do not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them; for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have been long shed, so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.

If your religion be genuine, it will be often the source of the warmest and most interesting feelings. It will be a spring of consolation within, which will often be full and pour itself forth. If the gospel has not taken a share in the feelings of our hearts, if it has not moved the great springs of our hopes and fears, we may be assured we have never experienced its force. It is filled with such views as cannot fail to interest and transport us. Besides, if we do not feel the gospel as well as believe it, how can it support against the overwhelming influence of what we *do* feel? The world steals upon us, and engages our affections on all sides. Its prospects enrapture, and its pleasures are seducing us. Will a religion which rests only upon opinion, and a conviction, at times extorted from us, keep us firm against those assaults, and stem the force of a torrent which never ceases to flow? This can be done only by opposing hope to hope, feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons why christianity does not more purify our hearts is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one, without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never, indeed, be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion; but religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. The reason of this is obvious. *The world and the fashion of it is passing away,* and our union with it will soon be dissolved; whilst the relation which we bear to God, and to eternity, is ever the same, and extends to all times, and to all places. The character which, as christians, we sustain, is our high character; and the hopes which, as such, we indulge, are our high hopes. It is but reasonable, it is but just, therefore, that a desire of discharging the one, and attaining the other, should sway the *whole* of our conduct. Perhaps you will be ready to think that this advice is impracticable. You will urge the necessity of attending to your worldly callings, which, you will say, cannot be carried on, unless you give them the greater part of your time and attention. Be it so. Remember, we do not advise you to spend more of your *time* in religion than in your ordinary concerns. This would extinguish all human industry. But, if you be sincere in your profession of religion, you will regulate your pursuits by it,

and engage no further in any of them than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all your other concerns, you will still make religion the centre of your hopes, and the consummation of your wishes. An ordinary mechanic devotes more of his time to the labour of his hands than to any other concern; but it is not his laborious employment that interests his heart: it is his desire of procuring subsistence, and of warding off the inconveniences of poverty and want.

Finally, brethren, let each of us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be, indeed, found sincere, after thus searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm, and our consolations more steady; or, if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for mercy, and of reading our danger in our sin, not in our punishment. *But we hope better things of you, brethren, and things which accompany salvation.* We hope that you have fled *from the wrath to come,* and have *laid hold on eternal life;* and we rejoice in the prospect of meeting you in a much larger assembly, at the great day, when you shall have washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Then, *brought out of much tribulation,* and *redeemed from every nation, and tongue, and people,* his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the

kingdom to his God, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of individual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with adoration and delight, when, while we are praising him, he shall receive from millions of beings, and millions of worlds, the same incense!

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association.

[Written in 1809.]

ON THE

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

DEAR BRETHREN,

THE subject to which we would invite your attention on the present occasion, is *the Influence of the Spirit;* which it is not our design to discuss in a doctrinal manner, (taking it for granted you are already established in the belief of a divine agency on the soul, and have a competent acquaintance with its nature and effects,) but rather with a view to assist you in making a suitable improvement of what you already acknowledge and believe. Assuming it on the ground of revelation for an undoubted fact, that there is an operation of the Holy Ghost, to which the regeneration and growth in holiness of every christian is to be primarily imputed, and that without it nothing can be done or attained to any important purpose in religion; we request your candid attention to a few hints respecting the most likely method of securing and perpetuating that blessed influence. To this we are the more encouraged, by remarking the numerous cautions, warnings, and advices, with which the men-

tion of this subject is joined in the sacred writings; sufficient to show that the doctrine of which it treats is a practical doctrine, not designed to supersede the use of means, or the exercise of our rational powers; but rather to stimulate us to exertion, and teach us how to exert them aright. *If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of redemption.*

The Spirit, we must remember, is a most free agent, and though he will not utterly forsake the work of his hands, he may be expected to withdraw himself, in a great measure, on being slighted, neglected, or opposed; and as our holiness and comfort depend entirely upon him, it is important for us to know, what deportment is calculated to invite, and what to repel his presence.

1. If we would wish for much of the presence of God by his Spirit, we must learn to set a high value upon it. The first communication of spiritual influence, is, indeed, imparted without this requisite; for it cannot be possessed in any adequate degree except by those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. *I am found of them that sought me not.* But in subsequent donations, the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by a rule, that of bestowing his richest favours where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized. The principle whence divine communications flow, is free, unmerited benignity; but in the mode of dispensing its fruits, it is worthy of the supreme Ruler to consult his majesty, by with-

holding a copious supply, till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts.

No words are adequate to express the excellence and dignity of the gift of the divine Spirit. While Solomon was dedicating the temple, his great soul appears to have been put into a rapture at the very idea, that he whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, should deign to dwell with man upon the earth. How much more should each of us be transported when he finds the idea realised, by his own heart having become the seat of the divine presence! There are two considerations drawn from scripture, which assist us in forming a conception of the magnitude of this blessing.

The first is, that it is the great promise of the christian dispensation, and stands in nearly the same relation to us, that the coming of the Messiah did to pious Jews. They waited for the consolation of Israel in the birth of Christ; and now that event is past, we are waiting in a similar manner, for the promise of the Spirit, of which the church has hitherto enjoyed but the first fruits. To this, the Saviour, after his resurrection, pointed the expectation of his apostles, as emphatically the promise of the Father, which they were to receive at the distance of a few days; and when it was accomplished at the day of Pentecost, we find Peter insisting on it as the most illustrious proof of his ascension, as well as the chief fruit that converts were to reap from their repentance and baptism. *Repent and be baptized,* said he, *every one*

of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise (that is, the promise of the Spirit) *is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call.* The apostle Paul places it in a similar light when he tells us, *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles:* and in what that blessing consists, he informs us, by adding, *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.* On this account, probably, he is styled the *Spirit of promise,* that is, *the Spirit so often promised;* in the communication of whom, the promises of God so centre, that it may be considered as the sum and substance of all the promises.

Another consideration, which evinces the supreme importance of this gift, is, that, in the esteem of our Lord, it was more than a compensation to his disciples, for the loss of his bodily presence; so much superior to it, that he tells them, it was expedient he should leave them in order to make way for it: *If I go not away, the Spirit will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Great as the advantages were they derived from his society, they yet remained in a state of minority; their views were contracted, their hearts full of earthly adhesions, and a degree of carnality and prejudice attended them, which it was the office of the Spirit only to remove. From his more ample and effectual teaching, a great increase of knowledge was to accrue,

to qualify them for their work of bearing witness to Christ, and a powerful energy to go forth, which was to render their ministry, though in themselves so much inferior, far more successful than the personal ministry of our Lord. In consequence of his agency, the apostles were to become enlightened and intrepid, and the world convinced. *I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement.* Accordingly, after his descent, we find the apostles strangely transformed: an unction, a fervour, a boldness, marked their character, to which they had hitherto been strangers; and such conviction attended their preaching, that in a short time a great part of the world sunk under the weapons of their holy warfare. Nor is there any pretence for alleging, that this communication was confined to miraculous gifts, since it is asserted to be that Spirit which should abide in them for ever, and by which the church should be distinguished from the world. He is styled, *the Spirit of truth, whom the world could not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but,* it is added, *ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.*

As we are indebted to the Spirit for the first formation of the divine life, so it is he who alone can maintain it, and render it strong and vigorous. It is his office to actuate the habits of grace where they are already planted; to hold our souls in life, and to *strengthen us that we may walk up and down in the*

name of the Lord. It is his office to present the mysteries of salvation; the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of his grace, in so penetrating and transforming a manner, as to render them vital, operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. Without his agency, however intrinsically excellent, they will to us be mere dead speculation, an inert mass: it is only when they are animated by his breath, that they become spirit and life.

It is his office to afford that anointing, by which we may know all things; not only by a light which is merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart, as to give a relish of the sweetness of divine truth, and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates. It belongs to him *to seal us to the day of redemption;* to put that mark and character upon us, which distinguishes the children of God, as well as to afford a foretaste and an earnest of the future inheritance. *And hereby,* saith an apostle, *we know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* It is his office to subdue the corruption of our nature, not by leaving us inactive spectators of the combat, but by engaging us to a determined resistance to every sinful propensity, by teaching our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so that the victory shall be ours, and the praise his. *To help the infirmities of saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought, by making intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered,* is an important branch of his office. He kindles their de-

sires, gives them a glimpse of the fulness of God; that all-comprehending good; and by exciting a relish of the beauties of holiness, and the ineffable pleasure which springs from nearness to God, disposes them to the fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. In short, as Christ is the way to the Father, so it is equally certain, that the Spirit is the fountain of all the light and strength which enable us to walk in that way. Lest it should be suspected that in ascribing so much to the agency of the Spirit, we diminish the obligations we owe to the Redeemer, it may not be improper to remark, that the tendency of what we have advanced, rightly understood, will be just the contrary, since the Scriptures constantly remind us, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of his mediation, and the purchase of his death. It was his interposing as *Emmanuel, God with us,* to repair the breach betwixt man and God, that prevailed upon the Father to communicate the Spirit to such as believe on him, and to intrust the whole agency of it to his hands. As the reward of his sufferings, he ascended on high, and received gifts for men; of which, the right of bestowing the Spirit is the principal, that the Lord God might dwell among them. The donation, in every instance, through the successive periods of the church, looks back to the death of the Redeemer, as the root and principle whence it takes its rise, and consequently is calculated to enlarge our conceptions of his office and character, as the copiousness of the streams evinces the exuberance of the

fountain. To him the Spirit was given above measure; in him it resides as in an inexhaustible spring, to be imparted in the dispensation of his gospel to every member of his mystical body, in pursuance of the purpose of his grace, and the ends of his death. It is *his* Spirit: hence we read of *the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus*, not only by reason of the essential union which subsists between the persons of the Godhead, but because the right of bestowing it was ascertained to him in the covenant of redemption.

2. If we would wish to enjoy much of the light and influence of the Spirit, we must seek it by fervent prayer. There are peculiar encouragements held out in the word of God to this purpose. *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* To illustrate the readiness of our heavenly Father to bestow this blessing, our Lord borrows a comparison from the instinct of parental affection, which prompts a parent to give with alacrity good things to his children. He will not merely supply his wants, which benevolence might prompt him to do with respect to a stranger, but he will do it with feelings peculiar to the parental relation, and will experience as much pleasure in conferring, as the child in receiving, his favours. It is thus with our heavenly Father: he delights in exercising kindness to his children, and especially in promoting their spiritual welfare. He gives not merely with the liberality of a prince, but with the heart of a father. It is worth remarking, that in relating the preceding discourse, while one

evangelist makes express mention of the Spirit, another speaks only of good things, intimating that the communications of the Spirit comprehend whatever is good. Other things may, or may not, be ultimately beneficial: they are either of a doubtful nature in themselves, or are rendered so by the propensity our corruption gives us to abuse them. But the influence of the Spirit, by its efficacy in subduing that corruption, must be invariably beneficial: it is such an immediate emanation from God the fountain of blessedness, that it can never fail of being intrinsically, essentially, and eternally good. It is also deserving our attention, that the injunction of seeking it by prayer, is prefaced by a parable constructed on purpose to teach us the propriety of urging our suit with importunity. In imploring other gifts (which we are at liberty to do with submission), it is still a great point of duty to moderate our desires, and to be prepared for a disappointment; because, as we have already remarked, it is possible the things we are seeking, may neither conduce to the glory of God, nor to our ultimate benefit; for "who knoweth what is good for a man all the days of this his *vain life?*" But when we present our requests for a larger measure of his grace, we labour under no such uncertainty, we may safely let forth all the ardour and vehemence of our spirits, since our desires are fixed upon what is the very knot and juncture, where the honour of God and the interests of his creatures are indissolubly united. Desires after grace are, in fact, desires

after God; and how is it possible they can be too vehement or intense, when directed to such an object? His gracious presence is not like the limited goods of this life, fitted to a particular crisis, or adapted to a special exigency in a fluctuating scene of things; it is alike suited to all times and seasons, the food of souls, the proper good of man, under every aspect of providence, and even the exchange of worlds. *My soul,* said David, *panteth after God, yea, for the living God. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.* The most eminent effusions of the Spirit we read of in scripture, were not only afforded to prayer, but appear to have taken place at the very time that exercise was performed. The descent of the Holy Ghost, at the day of Pentecost, was while the disciples were with one accord in one place; and after the imprisonment of Peter and John, who being dismissed, went to their own company, *While they prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken with a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* When a new heart and a new spirit are promised in Ezekiel, it is added, *I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*

3. Habitual dependence on divine influence is an important duty. This may be considered as opposed to two things; first, to depending on ourselves, to the neglect of divine agency; next, to despondency and distrust. When the Holy Spirit has condescended to take the conduct of souls, it is unquestionably great presumption to enter upon

duty in the same manner as if no such assistance were needed, or to be expected; and the result will be as with Samson, who said, *I will go forth and shake myself, as in time past, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* It is one thing to acknowledge a dependence on heavenly influence in speculation, and another thing so to realise and to feel it as to say from the heart, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God.* A mere assent to this proposition, that the Spirit must concur in the production of every good work, (an assent not easily withheld without rejecting the Scriptures,) falls very short of the practical homage due from feeble worms to so great an Agent; and a most solemn and explicit acknowledgment of entire dependence, may reasonably be expected. When you engage in prayer, or in any other duty, endeavour to enter upon it with a serious and deliberate recollection of your need of the Spirit. Let the consciousness of your weakness and insufficiency for every good work, be a sentiment rendered familiar to your minds, and deeply impressed on your hearts.

But while we recommend this, there is another extreme against which we think it our duty to guard you, and that is, a disposition to despondency and distrust. We are most ready to acknowledge that the assistance you need is most free and gratuitous, neither given to our deservings, nor flowing from any natural connexion subsisting betwixt our endeavours and the exertion of divine agency. The Spirit of God is a free Spirit; and it is impossible

to conceive how either faith or prayer should have an intrinsic efficacy in drawing down influence from heaven. There is, however, a connexion established by divine vouchsafement, which entitles believers to expect, in the use of means, such measures of gracious assistance as are requisite to sustain and support them in their religious course. The Spirit is spoken of as the matter of promise to which every christian is encouraged to look: *the promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord your God shall call.* Agreeable to this, it is represented as the express purpose of Christ's becoming a curse for us, that the *promise of the Spirit might come on the Gentiles through faith.* The same expectation is justified by the Saviour's own declaration, when on the last and great day of the feast he stood and cried, *Whoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink; for he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This,* says the evangelist, *he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

The readiness of the Holy Ghost to communicate himself to true believers, is also evinced by the tenour of evangelical precepts: *be ye strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* To command a person to be strong, seems strange and unusual language, but is sufficiently explained when we reflect, that a portion of spiritual power is ready to be communicated to those who duly seek it: *be ye filled with the Spirit,* which is the exhortation of the same apostle, takes it for granted that a copious sup-

ply is at hand, sufficient to satiate the desires of the saints. We are at a loss to account for such precepts, without supposing an established connexion betwixt the condition of believers, and the further communication of divine influence. To the same purpose Paul speaks with apostolic authority, *this I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;* and Jude inculcates the duty of praying in the Spirit, which would be strange if no assistance were to be obtained; and as prayer is a duty of daily occurrence, the injunction implies that it is ready to be imparted to christians, not by fits and starts, or at distant intervals, but in a stated, regular course.

For this reason, when we hear christians complaining of the habitual withdrawment of the divine presence, we are under the necessity of ascribing it to their own fault: not that we mean to deny there is much of sovereignty in this affair, or that *the Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth.* But it should be remembered, we are now adverting to the situation of real believers, who are entitled to the promise; and though it is probable there is much of sovereignty exercised even with respect to *them,* we apprehend it rather concerns those influences which are consolatory, than such as are sanctifying; though there is a degree of satisfaction intermingled with every exercise of genuine piety, yet it is manifest, some influences of the Spirit tend more immediately to comfort, others to purification. By some we are engaged in the fixed contemplation of objects which exist out of ourselves, the perfections of God,

the excellency of Christ, the admirable constitution of the gospel, accompanied with a delightful conviction of a personal interest in whatever comes under our view; the natural fruit of which is *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* By others, we are more immediately impressed with a lasting sense of our extreme unworthiness, and made to mourn over remaining corruption, and the criminal defects inherent in our best services.

In the midst of such exercises, it is possible hope may languish, and comfort be reduced to a low ebb, yet the divine life may be still advancing, and the soul growing in humility, deadness to the world, and the mortification of her own will; as the sap during winter retires to the root of the plant, ready to ascend and produce verdure and beauty on the return of spring. *This is the will of God, even our sanctification;* and though he delights in comforting his people at proper seasons, he is much less intent on this, than in promoting their spiritual improvement, to which, in this their probationary state, every thing is made subservient. Let us not then confound the decay of consolation with the decay of piety, nor imagine we can want the aids necessary to prevent the latter, unless we have forfeited them by presumption, negligence, and sloth. Whenever christians sensibly decline in religion, they ought to charge themselves with the guilt of having grieved the Spirit; they should take the alarm, *repent and do their first works;* they are suffering under the rebukes of that paternal justice which God exercises in his own

family. Such a measure of gracious assistance in the use of means, being by the tenour of the new covenant *ascertained* to real christians, as is requisite for their comfortable walk with God, to find it withheld should engage them in deep searchings of heart; and make them fear lest *a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should appear to come short of it.* But this leads us to observe, in the last place, that,

4. If we wish to enjoy the light of the Spirit, we must take care to maintain a deportment suited to the character of that divine agent. When the apostle exhorts us not to *grieve the Spirit of God, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption,* it is forcibly implied that he is susceptible of offence, and that to offend him involves heinous ingratitude and folly: ingratitude, for what a requital is this for being sealed to the day of redemption! and folly, inasmuch as we may fitly say on this, as Paul did on a different occasion, *Who is he that maketh us glad, but the same that is made sorry by us?* Have we any other comforter when he is withdrawn? Is there a single ray of light can visit us in his absence, or can we be safe for a moment without his guidance and support? If the immense and infinite Spirit, by a mysterious condescension, deigns to undertake the conduct of a worm, ought it not to yield the most implicit submission? The appropriate duty owing to a faithful and experienced guide is a ready compliance with his dictates; and how much more may this be expected, when the disparity betwixt the parties in question is no less than infinite? The language of

the Holy Ghost, in describing the manners of the ancient Israelites, is awfully monitory to professors of religion in every age; *they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them.* As we wish to avoid whatever is more curious than useful, we shall not stay to inquire precisely on what occasions, or to what extent, the Spirit is capable of being resisted: it may be sufficient to observe, it is evident from melancholy experience, that it is very possible to neglect what is the obvious tendency of his motions, which is invariably to produce universal holiness. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, faith:* whatever is contrary to these, involves an opposition to the Spirit, and is directly calculated to quench his sacred influence.

From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of scripture, we may with certainty conclude the indulgence of all the irascible and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature; and it is remarkable, that the injunction of not grieving the Holy Spirit, is immediately followed by a particular caution against cherishing such dispositions; *let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Have you not found by experience, that the indulgence of the former has destroyed that

self-recollection and composure, which are so essential to devotion? Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell. The indulgence of sensual lusts, or of whatever enslaves the soul to the appetites of the body, in violation of the rules of sobriety and chastity, it seems almost unnecessary to add, must have a direct tendency to quench his sacred influences; wherever such desires prevail, they war against the soul, immerse it in carnality, and utterly indispose it to every thing spiritual and heavenly. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;* it bears a resemblance to its author in being a spiritual production, which requires to be nourished by divine meditation, by pure and holy thoughts.

If you wish to live in the fellowship of the Spirit, you must guard with no less care against the encroachments of worldly-mindedness; recollecting we are christians just as far as our treasures and our hearts are placed in heaven, and no farther. A heart overcharged with the cares of this world, is as disqualified for converse with God, and for walking in the Spirit, as by surfeiting and drunkenness; to which, by their tendency to intoxicate and stupify, they bear a great resemblance.

How many, by an immoderate attachment to wealth, and by being determined at all events to become rich, *have fallen into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows!* and where the result has not been so sig-

nally disastrous, a visible languor in religion has ensued, the friendship of serious christians been shunned, and the public ordinances of religion attended with little fruit or advantage. As it is the design of the Spirit, in his sacred visitations, to form us for an habitual converse with spiritual and eternal objects, nothing can tend more directly to contract it, than to bury our souls in earth: it is as impossible for the eye of the mind, as for that of the body, to look opposite ways at once; nor can we aim at *the things which are seen and temporal,* but by losing sight of those *which are unseen and eternal.*

But though a general attention to the duties of piety and virtue, and careful avoidance of the sins opposed to these, is certainly included in a becoming deportment to the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is not *all* that is included. The children of God are characterized in scripture by their being *led by the Spirit: led,* evidently not impelled, not driven forward in a headlong course, without choice or design; but being, by the constitution of their nature, rational and intelligent, and, by the influence of grace, rendered spiritual, they are disposed to obey at a touch, and to comply with the gentler insinuations of divine grace; they are ready to take that precise impression which corresponds with the mind and purpose of the Spirit. You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities, and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation,

where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. These are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather, and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine, and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.

The design of his operation is in one view invariably the same, the production of holiness; but the branches of which that consists, and the exercises of mind which are rendered subservient to it, are various; and he who is intent on walking in the Spirit will be careful to fall in with that train of thought, and cherish that cast of reflection, to which he is especially invited. For want of more docility in this respect it is probable we have often sustained loss. Permit us here to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind; the delusive glare of worldly

objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims, and establishing those practical conclusions, which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect? You have sometimes found, instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful impulse to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at the throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints, with groanings which cannot be uttered. When you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the utmost? Have you stretched every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into the chambers of imagery, and, while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out, and slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin; or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions? The

fruits which godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians were thus beautifully portrayed: *What carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what revenge.* There are moments in the experience of a good man, when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow-creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentments, and of healing those sore wounds which it is scarcely possible to avoid in passing through this unquiet world!

There is a holy skill in turning the several parts of christian experience to account, analogous to what the votaries of the world display in the improvement of every conjuncture from which it is possible to derive any emolument; and though the end they propose is mean and contemptible, the steadiness with which they pursue it, and their dexterity in the choice of means, deserve imitation. In these respects *they are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

Do not allow yourselves to indulge in religious sloth, or to give way to the solicitations of the tempter, from a confidence in the safety of your state, or in your spiritual immunities as christians. The habitual prevalence of such a disposition will afford a much stronger proof of insincerity than any arguments which can be adduced for the contrary; and admitting your pretensions to piety to be ever so

valid, a little reflection may convince you that a careless and negligent course will lay you open to the severest rebukes. *You only have I known* (says the Lord by the Prophet), *among all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit you for all your iniquities.*

Remember, dear brethren, we profess a peculiar relation to God as his children, his witnesses, his people, his temple; the character of that glorious Being, and of his religion, will be contemplated by the world, chiefly through the medium of our spirit and conduct, which ought to display, as in a mirror, the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is strictly appropriate to the subject of our present meditations, to remind you that you are temples. *For ye,* says the apostle, *are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* What purity, sanctity, and dignity may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted, so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others, in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others, is in him the profanation of a temple. Let us, dear brethren, watch and pray that nothing may be allowed a place in our hearts, that is not suitable to the residence of the holy and blessed God. Finally, *having such great and precious promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.*

*** *When Mr. Hall consented to the publication of this Circular Letter as a Tract, he annexed a few sentences of pointed application. These escaped the notice of the Editor, in the first edition, but are now subjoined.*

Having thus endeavoured to lay before you the most likely methods of obtaining the communications of the Spirit, as well as to shew the great importance of this gift, we might now dismiss the subject, were we not desirous of first guarding you against a dangerous mistake. The mistake to which we refer, is that of taking conviction for conversion, certain impressions of the guilt and danger of sin made upon the conscience, for the saving operations of the Spirit. These convictions are important: it is highly desirable and necessary to have a settled persuasion of the established connexion betwixt sin and punishment, and as a natural consequence to feel uneasiness and alarm, in proportion as we have reason to believe our sins are yet unpardoned. Until we see ourselves *lost*, we shall never truly come to Christ for salvation. Until we feel our malady, and dread its consequences, we shall never have recourse to the Physician, or be willing to comply with his prescription. We adjure you, therefore, as you value your eternal interests, not to trifle with convictions, or to endeavour to wear off religious concern and uneasiness, by the vanities of life, and the stupefactions of pleasure. Regard and cherish them as the sacred visitations of heaven; look upon them as mercifully designed to rouse and awaken you from a fatal stupor. They are often the harbingers of mercy.

Wherever the Spirit of God is in reality, he will convince of sin; but conviction is produced in thousands who still remain destitute of saving grace.—That influence of the Spirit by which a *change of heart* is effected, is essentially different from the distress and alarm which may be resolved into the exercise of mere natural conscience. For a man to be convinced that he is a sinner, and to tremble at the apprehension of wrath to come, is certainly something very distinct from becoming a new creature. Real christians have not only perceived their danger, but have fled for refuge; have not only been less or more troubled with a sense of guilt, but, in consequence of coming to Christ, have found rest for their souls. On a review of your past life, you perceive innumerable transgressions, it may be, and are perfectly convinced that you have been "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the

power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." So far it is well: your apprehensions are just, and well founded; and your situation more replete with danger than you have ever conceived it to be. Do not however rest here. Let the views you entertain excite you the more earnestly to press into the kingdom of God. Let them engage you to a more diligent use of the means of grace, and, above all, let them lead you to fix your hope and trust on the Redeemer, whose blood alone can cleanse you from all sin, and whose intercession is able to save "to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. Apply to him with humble faith and ardent prayer, and though you may be tempted to cherish doubts of the extent of his power and grace, say with him of old, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Lay aside, as far as possible, every other concern; postpone your attention to every other object, till you have reason to believe you have obtained mercy, and are renewed in the spirit of your mind. Address the throne of grace with increasing importunity, remembering who hath said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." In all your addresses to God, make use of the name and intercession of Christ, plead the efficacy of his blood, and the encouragement he hath afforded sinners in his gospel to return to God. Keep a continual watch over your words, thoughts, and actions: keep your heart with all diligence. Guard, with the utmost care, against levity and sloth, two of the most dangerous snares that can entangle the souls of men.

If you ask how you may know whether you are partakers of the special grace of God? we reply, This will be best ascertained by its fruits. When you feel a fixed hatred of sin, an intense thirst after holiness and perfection, and a delight in the word and ways of God, when you are habitually disposed to dwell on the thoughts of Christ and heaven, when the Saviour appears unspeakably precious, as the pearl of great price, and you are habitually ready to part with every thing for his sake, you may be certain that you are born of God. These are the fruits of the Spirit, which sufficiently demonstrate the influence and presence of that blessed Agent. Till you have experienced effects of this kind, you are in a wretched state, though surrounded with all the brightest earthly prospects, because you are estranged from God, and exposed to his eternal wrath and displeasure.

ON HEARING THE WORD:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS & MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association.

[Written in 1813.]

ON HEARING THE WORD.

DEAR BRETHREN,

THE subject on which we addressed you, at our last anniversary, was the proper method of Reading the Word of God; as a natural sequel to which, we beg leave, on the present occasion, to suggest a few hints of advice respecting the duty of Hearing it.

Preaching is an ordinance of God not entirely confined to the christian dispensation. From the Old Testament history, it appears that Ezra, upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, assembled them in the streets of Jerusalem, and ascending a stage, or pulpit, for the advantage of being better seen and heard, read the law in the ears of the people, and *gave the interpretation thereof.* It is probable that he did little more than, agreeable to the natural import of the phrase *interpretation,* translate, paragraph by paragraph, the Hebrew original into the Syriac, or Chaldee, which had become, during a captivity of forty years, the vernacular language of the Jews. From that time, however, synagogues were erected in all the cities

throughout Judea, and regular officers appointed to read, first the Pentateuch, and, after the persecution by Antiochus, the Prophets, and explain them in ample paraphrases or comments. Such was the origin of preaching.

When the fulness of time was come for God, in his infinite mercy, to send forth his Son, his appearance was first announced by John's proclaiming in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord;* which, after a short time, was succeeded by the personal ministry of Christ and his apostles, with whom the dispensation of the gospel, properly speaking, commenced. After his resurrection, our Lord extended the commission of the apostles to all nations, saying, *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* or, as you have it in Mark, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Upon the formation of christian churches, an order of men was appointed in each society for the express purpose of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments: wherein the wisdom and kindness of the Great Head of the church is eminently conspicuous; for such are the necessary avocations of life, so little the leisure most christians possess for the acquisition of knowledge, and such the deficiency of many in the elementary parts of education, that they will always, under God, be chiefly indebted to this appointment for any extensive acquaintance with divine truth.

The privilege of *reading* the Scriptures in our native language is of inestimable value; but, were it much more universal than it is, it would not supersede the necessity of hearing the Word: for there are not only difficulties in the Bible which require to be elucidated, and seeming contradictions to be solved, but the living voice of a preacher is admirably adapted to awaken attention, and to excite an interest, as well as to apply the general truths of revelation to the various cases of christian experience, and the regulation of human conduct. When an important subject is presented to an audience, with an ample illustration of its several parts, its practical improvement enforced, and its relation to the conscience and the heart insisted upon with seriousness, copiousness, and fervour, it is adapted, in the nature of things, to produce a more deep and lasting impression than can usually be expected from reading. He who knows *how forcible are right words,* and how apt man is to be moved by man, has consulted the constitution of our frame, by appointing an order of men, whose office it is to address their fellow-creatures on their eternal concerns. Strong feeling is naturally contagious; and if, as the Wise Man observes, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;* the combined effect of countenance, gesture, and voice, accompanying a powerful appeal to the understanding and the heart, on subjects of everlasting moment, can scarcely fail of being great.

But, independently of the natural tendency of the christian ministry to promote spiritual improvement, it derives a peculiar efficacy from its being a divine appointment. It is not merely a natural, it is also an *instituted* means of good; and whatever God appoints, by special authority, he graciously engages to bless, provided it be attended to with right dispositions, and from right motives. The means of grace are, as the words import, the consecrated channels in which his spiritual mercies flow; and, as the communication of spiritual blessings always implies an exertion of divine power, so these become the stated instrument, or occasion of its exercise. These are emphatically his ways, in which he is wont to walk with his people. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.** Though the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, where the gospel is not preached the effects of his operation are rarely to be discerned, and we witness few or no indications of a renewed character out of the bounds of Christendom. From the history of religion, in all ages, it appears that the Spirit is accustomed to follow in the footsteps of his revealed Word; and that, wherever his work lies, he prepares his way by first communicating the Oracles of God. When he proposed to take out a people for his name from among the Gentiles, the first step he took was to commission the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. To this

* Isaiah lxiv. 5.

St. Paul most solemnly directs our attention, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, as the grand instrument of human salvation :—*When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* So intimate by divine appointment, is the connexion betwixt the salvation of man and the ministry of the Word, that the method of salvation, under the gospel, derives from the latter its distinguishing appellation, being denominated the *hearing of faith.* St. Jude, in like manner, asserts it to be the instrumental cause of our regeneration. *Of his own will begat he us, by the Word of Truth.* And to the same purpose St. Peter reminds the christians, whom he was addressing, *that they were born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God; which word,* he adds, *is by the gospel preached unto you.* The *written* Word, we are told, indeed, from the highest authority, is able to make us wise unto salvation, and many pleasing instances of its saving efficacy might be produced to confirm this position; but, as the gospel was preached before it was penned, it is certain that most of the passages which speak on this subject are to be referred to its public ministry, and that, in subsequent ages, God has put a distinguishing honour upon it, by employing it as the principal means of accomplishing his saving purposes. There is every reason to suppose that the far greater part of those who have been truly sanctified and enlightened, will

ascribe the change they have experienced principally to the *hearing of faith.*

What a powerful motive results from thence to take heed how we hear! If we feel any concern for a share in the great salvation, how careful should we be not to neglect the principal means of obtaining it! If there be a class from whom the spiritual beauty and glory of the gospel remain concealed, it consists of a description of persons the very mention of whom ought to make us tremble. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pretence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since the public ministry possesses, with respect to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages. Besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidently predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, *and straightway go his way and forget what manner of man he was.* If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind

were a school of piety; the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word: but while every thing around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is observed of the Jews at Berea, *that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so;* and the result was such as might be expected—a great multitude of them believed. Candid and attentive hearers place themselves, so to speak, in the way of the Spirit: while those who cannot be prevailed upon to give it serious attention may most justly be said to *put the kingdom of God far from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.* To such the awful

threatenings recorded in the Proverbs are most applicable :—*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* In such cases, the ministers of the gospel can do little more, than, like Jeremiah, retire to *weep in secret places for their pride.*

But as we, who are assembled on the present occasion, consist of ministers and delegates from a number of associated churches, which we consider ourselves as addressing in these our circular epistles, we shall confine ourselves, in our subsequent remarks, to such heads of advice on the duty of hearing the Word, as are appropriate to the character of professing christians. We will consider ourselves as addressing such, and such only, as must be supposed, in a judgement of charity, to have an experimental acquaintance with divine truth.

First. Previous to your entering into the house of God, seek *a prepared heart,* and implore the blessing of God on the ministry of his Word. It may be presumed that no real christian will neglect to preface his attendance on social worship with secret prayer. But let the acquisition of a devout and serious frame, freed from the cares, vanities, and pollutions of the world, accompanied with earnest desires after God, and the communications of his grace, form a principal subject of your private devotions. Forget not to implore a blessing on the public ministry, that it may accomplish

in yourselves, and to others, the great purposes it is designed to answer; and that those measures of assistance may be afforded to your ministers which shall replenish them with light, love, and liberty, that they may speak the mystery of the gospel as it ought to be spoken. Pastors and people would both derive eminent advantages from such a practice; they, in their capacity of exhibiting, you, in your preparation for receiving, the mysteries of the gospel. As the duties of the closet have the happiest tendency, by solemnizing and elevating the mind, to prepare for those of the sanctuary, so the conviction of your having borne your minister on your heart before the throne of grace would, apart from every other consideration, dispose him to address you with augmented zeal and tenderness. We should consider it as such a token for good, as well as such an unequivocal proof of your attachment, as would greatly animate and support us under all our discouragements.

Secondly. Establish in your minds the highest *reverence and esteem* of the glorious gospel. Recollect the miracles wrought to confirm it; the sanction, the awful sanction, by which a due reception of it is enforced, and the infinite value of that blood by which its blessings were ratified and procured. Recollect that on its acceptance or rejection, on the effects which it produces on the heart and life, depends our state for eternity; since there is no other mean devised for our recovery, no other name given under heaven by which we

can be saved, besides that which it exhibits. It is not merely the incorruptible seed of regeneration; it is also the mould in which our souls must be cast, agreeable to the apostle's beautiful metaphor:— *You have obeyed from the heart that form* (or mould) *of doctrine into which ye were delivered.* In order to our bearing the image of Christ, who is the first-born among many brethren, it is necessary to receive its impress in every part; nor is there any thing in us what it ought to be, any thing truly excellent, but in proportion to its conformity to that pattern. Its operation is not to be confined to time or place; it is the very element in which the christian is appointed to live, and to receive continual accessions of spiritual strength and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the divine glory. The more you esteem the gospel, the more will you be attached to that ministry in which its doctrines are developed, and its duties explained and inculcated; because, in the present state of the world, it is the chief, though not the only means, of possessing yourselves of its advantages. To tremble at God's Word is also mentioned as one of the most essential features in the character of him to whom God will look with approbation.

Thirdly. Hear the Word with *attention.* If you are convinced of the justice of the preceding remarks, nothing further is requisite to convince you of the propriety of this advice, since they all combine to enforce it. We would only remark, in

general, that the knowledge derived from a discourse depends entirely upon attention, in exact proportion to which will be the progress made by a mind of a given capacity. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly; but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity: it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.

The practice of sleeping in places of worship, a practice we believe not prevalent in any other places of public resort, is not only a gross violation

of the advice we are giving, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge it. If the apostle indignantly inquires of the Corinthians whether they had not houses to eat and drink in, may we not, with equal propriety, ask those who indulge in this practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory? A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would, in most cases, put a stop to this abomination; and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the Word who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the glutting which absolutely disqualifies him for receiving it?

Fourthly. Hear the Word of God with *impartiality.* To be partial in the law was a crime formerly charged upon the Jewish priests; nor is it less sinful in the professors of christianity. There is a class of hearers who have their favourite topics, to which they are so immoderately attached that they are offended if they are not brought forward on all occasions; while there are others, of at least equal importance, which they can seldom be prevailed upon to listen to with patience. Some are never pleased but with doctrinal statements; they are in raptures while the preacher is insisting on the doctrines of grace, and the privileges of God's people; but when he proceeds to inculcate the practical improvement of these doctrines, and the necessity of adorning the profession of them

by the virtues of a holy life, their countenances fall, and they make no secret of their disgust. Others are all for practical preaching, while they have no relish for that truth which can alone sanctify the heart. But, as it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. It is difficult to suppose that such persons love the Word of God, as the Word of God; for, if they did, every part of it, in its due proportion, and its proper place, would be acceptable. It is possible, in consequence of the various exigencies of the christian life, that there may be seasons to which some views of divine truth may be peculiarly suited, and on that account heard with superior advantage and delight; but this is perfectly consistent with an impartial attachment to the whole of revelation. But to feel an habitual distaste to instruction, the most solid and scriptural, unless it be confined to a few favourite topics, is an infallible indication of a wrong state of mind. It is only by yielding the soul to the impression of every divine communication and discovery, that the several graces, which enter into the composition of the new creature, are nourished and sustained. As the perfection of the christian system results from the symmetry of its several parts, in which there is nothing redundant, nothing disproportioned, and nothing defective; so the beauty of the christian character consists in its exhibiting an adequate impress and representation

of the whole. If there be any particular branch of the Word of God to which we are habitually indisposed, we may generally conclude that is precisely the part which we most need; and, instead of indulging our distaste, we ought seriously to set ourselves to correct the mental disease which has given occasion to it.

In some instances, the partiality to certain views of truth, to the exclusion of others, of which we are complaining, may arise, not so much from moral disorder, as from a deficiency of religious knowledge, and that contraction of mind which is its usual consequence. We would earnestly exhort persons of this description not to make themselves the standard, nor attempt to confine their ministers to the first principles of the Oracles of God. There are in most assemblies some who are capable of digesting strong meat, whose improvement ought to be consulted; and it behoves such as are not, instead of abridging the provisions of the family, to endeavour to enlarge their knowledge, and extend their inquiries. A christian minister is compared by our Lord to an householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

Fifthly. Hear the Word with constant *self-application.* Hear not for others, but for yourselves. What should we think of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which

they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without tasting a single article? Such, however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of meeting with something suited to your particular state; something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions; mortify your easily-besetting sin, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be sufficient to give you that insight into your character which will teach what you need; what the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed, and on what account you feel most shame and humiliation before God. Every one may know, if he pleases, the *plague* of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold upon what is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a personal thing, an individual concern; for every one of us must give an account of *himself* to God, and every man bear his own burden. *Is not my Word as a fire,* saith the Lord, *and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* If such be its power and efficacy, lay your hearts open to it, and expose them fully to the stroke of the hammer, and the action of the fire. Do not imagine, because you are tolerably well acquainted with the system of the gospel, that you have therefore nothing to learn; and that

your only obligation to attend its ministry arises from the necessity of setting an example. It is probable your knowledge is much more limited than you suppose; but, if it be not, it is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing is the acquisition of new truths. There is a spiritual perception, infinitely more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most but a means to the former, and this perception is not confined to new propositions. It is frequently, nay most frequently, attached to truths already known; and, when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action, and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculations, as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. *Whilst I am in this tabernacle,* said Peter, *I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.* We appeal to the experience of every real christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the gospel. As the

Word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Sixthly. Hear with *candour.* The indulgence of a nice and fastidious taste is as adverse to the improvement of the hearer as it is to the comfort of the minister. Considering the variety of our avocations, the necessity we are under of addressing you in all states of mind, and sometimes on the most unexpected occasions, if we could not rely on your candour, our situation would be scarcely tolerable. Where the general tendency of a discourse is good, and the instruction delivered is weighty and solid, it is the part of candour to overlook imperfections in the composition, manner, or elocution of the speaker; imitating, in this respect, the example of the Galatians, of whom Paul testifies that they did not despise his temptation, which was in the flesh—some unhappy peculiarity in his speech or countenance, we may suppose, which exposed him to the derision of the unfeeling. The Lord, by the mouth of Isaiah, severely censures such as *make a man an offender for a word,* a fault too prevalent in many of our churches, especially among such as are the least informed and judicious; for the disposition to sit in judgement upon the orthodoxy of ministers is usually in an inverse proportion to the ability.

Be not hasty in concluding that a preacher is erroneous because he may chance to use a word, or a phrase, not exactly suited to your taste and comprehension. It is very possible the idea it is intended to convey, may perfectly accord with your own sentiments; but, if it should not, it is equally possible the propriety of it may be vindicated by considerations with which you are not acquainted. *Be not many masters,* many teachers, saith St. James, *knowing ye shall receive the greater condemnation.* Hear the Word of God less in the spirit of judges than of those who shall be judged by it. If you are not conscious of your need of religious instruction, why elect pastors and teachers for that purpose? but, if you are, how inconsistent is it to indulge that spirit of cavil and censure which can have no other effect than to deter your ministers from the faithful discharge of their office, from declaring the whole counsel of God! In most dissenting congregations, there are a few persons who value themselves on their skill in detecting the unsoundness of ministers; and who, when they hear a stranger, attend less with a view to spiritual improvement than to pass their verdict, which they expect shall be received as decisive. It is almost unnecessary to add that they usually consist of the most ignorant, conceited, and irreligious part of the society. Such a disposition should, as much as possible, be discouraged and suppressed.

Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which

is able to save your souls. Despise not men of plain talents, who preach the truth, and appear to have your eternal welfare at heart. If you choose to converse with your fellow-christians on what you have been hearing, a practice which, if rightly conducted, may be very edifying, let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty and glory, of those great things of God which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of that great apostle; any more than the three thousand, who at the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart: their minds were too much occupied by the momentous truths they had been listening to, to leave room for such reflections. Yet this is the only kind of religious conversation (if it deserve the appellation) in which too many professors engage. "Give me (says the incomparable Fenelon) the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the Word of God, as makes me desirous of hearing it from any mouth."

When your ministers are exposing a particular vice, and endeavouring to deter from it by the motives which reason and revelation supply, guard against a suspicion of their being *personal.* That they ought not to be so we readily admit; that is, that they ought not to descend to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall necessarily

direct the attention to one or more individuals: but if they are not at liberty to point their arrows against particular vices among them, or are expected, lest they should wound, to make a courteous apology, by assuring the audience of their hope and conviction that none among them are implicated, they had better seal up their lips in perpetual silence. It is a most indispensable part of our office to warn sinners of every description; and, that we may "not beat the air," to attack particular sins, as well as sin in the abstract; and if, without our intending it, an individual suspects he is personally aimed at, he merely bears an involuntary testimony to our fidelity and skill.

Seventhly. Hear the Word with a sincere resolution of *obeying* it. *If ye know these things,* said our Lord, *happy are ye if ye do them.—He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock.* To be a forgetful hearer of the Word, and not a doer, is to forfeit all the advantages of the christian dispensation, which is imparted solely with a view to practice. The doctrine of faith is published with a design to produce the obedience of faith in all nations. The doctrine of repentance is nothing more or less than the command of God, that all men every where should repent. If we are reminded that *he who in times past spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son,* it is that we may be admonished not to *refuse* him that speaketh. If we are taught the supreme

dignity and exaltation of Christ as a Mediator, it is that *every knee may bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.* If the apostles, having the mind of Christ, faithfully imparted it, it was that the same mind may be in us, to purify our passions, and regulate our conduct. We can scarcely imagine a greater impertinence than to hear the Word with apparent seriousness, without intending to comply with its directions. It is a solemn mockery, concealing, under an air of reverence and submission, a determination to rebel, and, in the language of the prophet, a heart bent on backsliding. To suppose the Supreme Being pleased with such a mode of attendance, is to impute to him a conduct which it would be an insult to ascribe to a fellow-creature; for who, but the weakest of mortals, under the character of a master or a sovereign, would be gratified with the profound and respectful attention with which his commands were heard, while there existed a fixed resolution not to obey? Remember, dear brethren, the practical tendency of every christian doctrine: remember that the ministry of the gospel is the appointed instrument of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience; and that, consequently, the utmost attention and assiduity in hearing it is fruitless and unavailing, which fails to produce that effect.

Finally. Be careful, after you have heard the Word, to *retain and perpetuate its impressions.* Meditate, retire, and digest it in your thoughts; turn it into prayer; in a word, spare no pains to fasten

it upon your hearts. You have read, dear brethren, of those *to whom the gospel was preached, as well as to us, but the Word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Endeavour to exert upon it distinct and vigorous acts of faith, and thereby to mingle and incorporate it with all the powers of the mind, and all the springs of action. But this you can never accomplish without deep and serious reflection; for want of which it is too often left loose and exposed, like uncovered seed, which the fowls of heaven easily pick up and devour. *Then cometh that wicked one,* says our Lord, *and taketh it out of his heart, and he becometh unfruitful.* How many hearers, by engaging in worldly conversation, or giving way to a vain and unprofitable train of thought, when they leave the sanctuary, lose the impressions they had received, instead of conducting themselves like persons who have just been put in possession of a treasure which they are anxious to secure from depredation! If Satan watches for an opportunity of taking the Word out of our hearts, what remains but that we oppose vigilance to vigilance, and effort to effort? and since the prize contended for, by the powers of darkness, is our souls, what a melancholy reflection it will be, if the disinterested malice of our enemies renders them vigilant and active in seeking their destruction, while we are careless and negligent in seeking their salvation! Satan, conscious that the Word of God is capable of elevating us to that pinnacle of happiness whence he fell,

contemplates its success with alarm, and spares no artifice or stratagem, which his capacious intellect can suggest, to obstruct its progress; and if we, by our criminal negligence, turn his ally against ourselves, we shall be guilty of that prodigy of folly and infatuation which is equally condemned by the councils of heaven and the machinations of hell.

ON THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE INNOCENT FOR THE GUILTY:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

LUTON, BEDFORDSHIRE,

APRIL 3, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

ABOUT seven years ago I went down to Leicester, at Mr. Hall's especial request, for the purpose of advising with him as to the preparation of a volume of Sermons, an undertaking to which he had then made up his mind. After various conversations, we fixed upon twelve, the subjects of which, with their respective modes of discussion and application, he regarded himself as able to recall without much difficulty. Among the sermons then selected was the following, composed in confirmation of a momentous point of christian doctrine, and which he had preached at Luton, in the spring of 1822. He spoke of it as most readily occurring to his mind in its entire arrangement, and I therefore urged him to commit it to paper as soon as possible. This, there is reason to believe, he accomplished accordingly. But the continued indifferent state of his health, the numerous interruptions to which he was then exposed, and his total inability to satisfy himself in composing for the press, jointly concurred in deterring him from advancing any farther towards the completion of his design, than to carry this sermon to its close, and to prepare the notes of *a few* others more fully than had been usual with him in his sketches for the pulpit.

The manuscript copy of this discourse, in Mr. Hall's own hand-writing, has been found since his death: not complete, it is true; but there are only two chasms of importance, and these I have been enabled to fill up by means of the reports of the same sermon which I have received from various friends. Although, therefore, I cannot but regret that the portions alluded to are not given precisely in Mr. Hall's language; yet, I trust, that nothing essential to the train of argument, or to its principal illustrations, is omitted.

June, 1831.

A SERMON.

ISAIAH liii. 8.

For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

ISAIAH has been usually styled the evangelical prophet; and, had no other part of his preaching descended to us except the portion before us, it would have sufficiently vindicated the propriety of that appellation. The sufferings of the Messiah are so affectingly portrayed, and their purpose and design so clearly and precisely stated, that we seem to be perusing the writings of an apostle rather than the predictions of a prophet: the obscurity of an ancient oracle brightens into the effulgence of gospel light. In no part of the New Testament is the doctrine of the atonement more unequivocally asserted, and the vicarious nature of our Lord's passion more forcibly inculcated, than in the context of the words selected as the basis of the present discourse.

It may not be improper to premise, that there is reason to believe that the original text has, in this instance, undergone some alteration, and

that it anciently stood thus, *he was smitten unto death.* It was thus written by Origen, who assures us that a certain Jew, with whom he disputed, seemed to feel himself more pressed by this expression than by any other part of the chapter. It is thus rendered by the Septuagint in our present copies; and if, in this instance, it had not concurred with the original, neither could Origen* have urged it with good faith, nor the Jew have felt himself embarrassed by the argument which it suggested.

The Jews pretend that no single person is designed in this portion of prophecy; but that the people of Israel collectively are denoted under the figure of one man, and that the purport of the chapter is a delineation of the calamities and sufferings which that nation should undergo, with a view to its correction and amendment. The absurdity of this evasion will be obvious to him who considers that the person who is represented as *stricken* is carefully distinguished by the prophet, from the people for whose benefit he suffered; *for the transgression of my people was he stricken:* in addition to which, he is affirmed to be stricken *even to death,* which, as Origen very properly urged, agrees well with the fate of an individual, but not with that of a people.

In spite of the vain tergiversation of the Jews, and the sophistry, equally impotent, of some who

* See Orig. cont. Cels. lib. i. c. 44, and Kennicott's Observations, quoted by Bishop Lowth in his Notes on Isaiah liii.—Ed.

bear the christian name, this portion of ancient writ will remain an imperishable monument of *the faith once delivered to the saints,* of the harmony subsisting between the Old and the New Testament in relation to the scheme of mediation, and the basis of hope.

That the sufferings of the Redeemer were vicarious and piacular, that he appeared in the character of a substitute for sinners, in distinction from a mere example, teacher, or martyr, is so unquestionably the doctrine of the inspired writers, that to deny it, is not so properly to mistake, as to contradict, their testimony; it must be ascribed, not to any obscurity in revelation itself, but to a want of submission to its authority.

The doctrine in question is so often asserted in the clearest terms, and tacitly assumed as a fundamental principle in so many more; it is intermingled so closely with all the statements of truth, and inculcations of duty throughout the Holy Scriptures, that to endeavour to exclude it from revelation is as hopeless an attempt as to separate colour from the rainbow, or extension from matter.

It is no part of the purpose of this discourse to enter into the proof of the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, as the defence of that doctrine will frequently engage the attention of every christian minister.

In addressing those who are thoroughly confirmed in its belief, we may be allowed to proceed on the assumption of its truth, while we endeavour,

in dependence on divine assistance, to illustrate the fitness of the scheme of *substitution*, and the indications which it affords of profound and unsearchable wisdom. Difficult as this subject must be allowed to be, I trust an attempt to discuss it, however feeble, is not exposed to the charge of presumption. It is one thing to presume to anticipate the counsels of Heaven, and another, after they are accomplished and exhibited as facts, humbly to explain the wisdom with which they are fraught. To have anticipated the scheme of redemption, by previously perceiving that it was, of all possible plans, the fittest to be adopted by a Being of infinite wisdom, was a task to which, it is probable, no finite intellect was adequate; but to perceive some of its congruities, when it is actually laid before us, may demand nothing.....

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[*Here there is a chasm in the manuscript: but from the notes of this sermon with which the Editor has been supplied, it may be filled, as to substance, thus:—*]

To perceive some of its congruities, may require but an ordinary degree of talent and discrimination, with an upright desire to learn what revelation teaches; and is altogether distinct from attempting to be *wise above what is written.*

In endeavouring to shew the circumstances which render this extraordinary method of proceeding consistent with the character of God, we

only pursue the guidance of the Sacred Writings, and find new motives for gratitude to our Heavenly Father for his unspeakable goodness.

Yet every reflecting person must perceive that there is in this doctrine, something extremely remote from ordinary apprehension, apart from the instruction derived from Holy Writ. That one of the human race, by submitting to an ignominious and painful death, should be the moral source of the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind, and, if duly improved, a sufficient source for the salvation of all, is surely one of the most extraordinary of the divine proceedings with regard to man. Nothing like this has ever existed. It seems to stand by itself, an insulated department of Divine Providence, to contain within itself a method of acting which was never seen before, and will never be repeated.

Among men, the substitution of a righteous for a guilty person could rarely occur. There is seldom found sufficient heroism or virtue to induce an individual so to offer himself; such a combination of benevolence, and of generous oblivion of self-interest, as to induce such a sacrifice.

Nor would it be fit, in ordinary cases, that it should be admitted: it would be too great an expenditure of the most valuable and costly elements of society; besides that it would be contrary to all moral economy to admit the violation of law to be pardoned at the expense of such as are its ornaments and blessings. No wise government

would permit, to any considerable extent, a proceeding which would tend to continue in existence those who inflict misery on mankind, at the expense of those who are its blessings.

Besides, if this practice were common, even upon the supposition that no crime should pass without being followed by punishment as a necessary result, yet such would be the uncertainty, after crime had been committed, as to who should bear the punishment, as would tend to take away all fear of committing offences. The best provision of wise legislation, which is to prevent crime, not to punish, would thus be removed. It would become a kind of lottery who should suffer, and thus the dread of punishment would be greatly impaired, if not entirely destroyed.

It is evident, therefore, that, so far from this being a human device, it could never have been *thought of* as an ordinary mode of procedure. And though there are some traces in history of persons supposed to have presented themselves, as vicarious offerings for relatives or connexions, yet they are feebly attested: while, among the well-attested records of judicial authority, we have *no* instance, probably, of any person who was himself innocent and upright, being *admitted* as a substitute in behalf of the guilty. Yet that this is the way in which the Infinite Mind has proceeded in laying the foundation of human acceptance, none can doubt but those who are disposed to torture the plainest expressions.

Let us, therefore, consider, what circumstances met in this case, and must be supposed to concur on any occasion of this kind, to render fit and proper the substitution of an innocent person in the place of the guilty; and what is peculiar in the character of our Saviour, which renders it worthy of God to set him apart as *a propitiation for the sins of the world,* and annex the blessings of eternal life to such as believe in the doctrine of the cross and repent and turn to God.

[☞ *We now return to the original copy.*]

First. It is obvious that such a procedure as we are now contemplating, in order to give it validity and effect, must be sanctioned by the supreme authority. It is a high exertion of the dispensing power, which can issue from no inferior source to that from which the laws themselves emanate.

For a private person, whatever might be his station in society, to pretend to introduce such a commutation of punishment as is implied in such a transaction, would be a presumptuous invasion of legislative rights, which no well-regulated society would tolerate. To attach the penalty to the person of the offender, is as much the provision of the law as to denounce it—they are equally component parts of one and the same regulation; and the power of dispensing with the laws is equivalent to the power of legislation.

Besides, so many circumstances, rarely, if ever combined, must concur to render such a procedure conducive to the ends of justice, that it would be the height of temerity to commit the determination of them to the exercise of private discretion instead of legislative wisdom.

This condition was most unequivocally satisfied in the mystery of Christ's substitution. When he undertook to *bear our sins in his own body on the tree,* he contracted no private engagement without the consent and approbation of his Heavenly Father. If he *gave himself for our sins, to redeem us from the present evil world,* it was *according to the will of God, even our Father.* On every occasion he reminds us, that he did nothing from himself, but that only which the Father had commissioned him to do. *I have power,* said he, *to lay down my life, and power to take it up again; this commandment received I of my Father. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do; Arise, let us go hence. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.**

* See John x. 18, to John xiv. 31. 1 John iv. 9, 10—14.

These inspired statements place it beyond all doubt, that christianity originated with the Supreme Governor of the universe, that its gracious provisions are the accomplishment of his counsel, and that its principles, however much they surpass the discoveries of reason, are in perfect harmony with the genuine dictates of natural religion. The substitution of the Redeemer in the room of sinners, was the contrivance of the same wisdom.

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[*A second chasm in Mr. Hall's manuscript, supplied in substance from the notes of others.*]

Secondly. Another indispensable circumstance in such a proceeding, is, that it should be perfectly voluntary on the part of the sufferer. Otherwise, it would be an act of the highest injustice; it would be the addition of one offence to another, and give a greater shock to all rightly-disposed minds, than the acquittal of the guilty without any atonement. Whenever such an offering has been spoken of as taking place, it is represented as originating with the innocent person himself.

Here there appears, at first sight, an insuperable difficulty in the way of human salvation. How could that be rendered which was, at once, due to sin and mankind at large? Where could one be found that would endure the penalty freely, which was incurred by a sinful world? This our Saviour did. He not only came by authority,

but such was his infinite love, that he came voluntarily. He expressed the deepest interest in his undertaking. He announced the particulars of his suffering, how he must be delivered, spit upon, and put to death; and in his hour of suffering, nothing is plainer than that he gave himself up to it voluntarily, according to the settled purpose of his own mind.

No sacrifice should go unwillingly to the altar. It was, indeed, reckoned a bad omen when any one did so. None ever went so willingly as *he. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,* and evinced a readiness to be offered up. *He endured the cross, despising the shame,* all for *the joy that was set before him;* that glorious reward, the eternal happiness of an innumerable multitude of intelligent creatures, who must have perished if he had not been *stricken to death* for them.

Thirdly. It is farther necessary that the substitute not only undertake voluntarily, but that he be perfectly free from the offence which renders punishment necessary. If he were tainted with that for which the punishment was assigned; nay, if he were only in part implicated in any other crime, he had already incurred some penalty; and there must be a proportionate deduction for what was due on his part.

Accordingly, in the case of man, divine justice cannot be willing to acquiesce in a substitute who is a sharer in guilt; for the law has a previous hold upon him; there is a debt due on his own account.

But Jesus Christ, though a man, was, by reason of his miraculous conception, free from the taint of original sin. *That holy thing* which was born of the virgin grew up in a course of perfect purity and rectitude. He could say to his enemies, *Which of you convinceth me of sin? He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* He, and he alone, of all who are of our nature, appeared in this character. By this means he became an immaculate sacrifice. He was shadowed forth by a pure lamb. *He was as a lamb without spot.* It was not this that rendered the sacrifice sufficient, but in this respect it accomplished all that could be expected of a human sacrifice. His Father rested in him, not only because he was his beloved Son, a partaker of his divine nature, but because he was holy and *such an one as became us;* not that we had a claim to such a priest, but no other could answer for us. The Levitical high-priests could *never, with those sacrifices which they offered continually, year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect; for each ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins;* and therefore he could only be an imperfect figure of the true high-priest, who offered not for himself, but offered himself for us.

Fourthly. There would be a great propriety in this also, that the innocent person substituted for the guilty, should stand in some relation to him.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was related to mankind; one like them whom he came to redeem. It was indispensable that he should stand in close

connexion with them to whom his righteousness was to be transferred. This was shadowed forth, in the law of a redeemer of a lost estate. The person who was to redeem must be related: hence a redeemer and a relation were expressed by one term, and the nearest relation was to redeem. This was not merely a law suited to that state of society, but was intended to foreshew the congruity of the substitution of Christ. *Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.* Thus he became *like unto his brethren. He took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham,* the seed he came to redeem. As he came to sinful men, he took on him the *likenëss of sinful flesh. He was made like unto us in all points, yet without sin.* The brazen serpent lifted up for the cure of the Israelites, was of the same form as the serpents by which they were wounded. By one man came sin and death, by one man came redemption. *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* Much more is adduced to the same effect by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, all tending to establish the truth, that as the first Adam was the cause of corruption, shame, and misery, so the second Adam is the source of holiness, life, and bliss.

Hence, then, the incarnation of our Lord was necessary. He was obliged to pass from one world to another, to take upon him a nature originally

foreign from him. *I came forth from the Father,* saith he, *and am come into the world;* and justly will the love that prompted him to do so be the everlasting theme of all holy and happy beings. It is probable that if nothing else had rendered unsuitable the substitution of angels for men, this would have been sufficient, that on account of the essential difference between their nature and that of man, there would have been an incongruity in substituting their acts for ours. But Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, being of one flesh and of one spirit with us, was fitted to sustain the character of redeemer. He thus became indeed our kinsman, one in the same circumstances, under the same law, liable to the same temptations, subject to the same passions, encompassed about with our infirmities, but *sinless;* and thus suited every way to become a substitute for our guilty race.

[☞ *We again return to the original copy.*]

Thus much is certain, that as the wisdom of God saw it requisite that the redemption of guilty man should be effected by a sacrifice proportioned to the exigence of the case, the assumption of human nature followed as a natural consequence. The ancient sacrifices appointed by Moses, possessed not (it was impossible they should) any intrinsic validity; they exhibited not the expiation, but the remembrance, of sin every year. This is the express declaration of the writer of the Epistle to

the Hebrews. *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* By his assumption of human nature he stood (notwithstanding that original superiority which removed him at an infinite distance) to the race of man in the relation of a brother; for the flesh which he condescended to take of the blessed virgin, of whom he was miraculously conceived, connected him with our common progenitor. *For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one,* derived from one parent; *for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

Fifthly. If the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty is at all permitted, it seems requisite that no advantage should be taken of a momentary enthusiasm, a sudden impulse of heroic feeling, which might prompt a generous mind to make a sacrifice, of which, on cool deliberation, he repented.

A proper space should be allowed for reviewing the resolution, for surveying it in all its conse-

quences, and forming a settled and immovable purpose. The self-devotion implied in such a transaction will acquire additional dignity in proportion as it appears the result, not of hurried and impetuous feeling, but of fixed determination and extended foresight; a resolution on which time has had no other effect than to fortify and confirm it.

How often is the pang of intense commiseration found to suggest the idea of sacrifices, which the calmer and more permanent dictates of self-interest consign to oblivion, and scatter to the wind! Perhaps there are few who have not been the subject of momentary feeling, the steady predominance of which would have made them heroes and martyrs, who yet shortly subside into their native selfishness, and before the season for action arrives, the genial current which warmed them for a moment is chilled and frozen.

In the case we are now contemplating, the admission of an innocent person to suffer instead of the guilty, nothing could reconcile the mind to such a procedure but such a settled purpose on the part of the substitute, as precludes the possibility of a vacillation or change. But this condition is found in the highest perfection on the part of the blessed Redeemer. His oblation of himself was not the execution of a sudden purpose, the fruit of a momentary movement of pity; it was the result of deliberate counsel, the accomplishment of an ancient purpose, formed in the remotest

recesses of a past eternity. He was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, when he set a compass upon the face of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he fixed the foundations of the earth: rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; his delights were with the sons of men.*

It is appointed indeed *for all men once to die.* With us it is an event inseparably attached to an abode on earth. But with the Redeemer it was not so properly an incident of his earthly existence as its principal end and design. He assumed life for the purpose of laying it down; and all the purposes, great as they were, which were accomplished by his life, were in entire subordination to those which he contemplated as the certain consequences of his death. In the course of his sojourn here, he never permitted himself to lose sight of it for a moment. The final scene, with all its terrors, was familiar to his imagination, and endeared to his heart; from no indifference to suffering, real or affected, but from the prospect of *the joy that was set before him. I have a baptism to be baptized with,* he exclaimed, and *how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* Instead of wishing to efface the remembrance of it by turning his attention to other objects, there was nothing

which he appeared more solicitous to inculcate on the minds of his disciples than the certainty of his future sufferings. *Then took he unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. Then shall he be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be spitefully entreated and spit upon, and they shall scourge him and put him to death.* When Peter, shocked at these annunciations, presumed to expostulate with his divine Master, he met with the severest rebuke. *Get thee behind me, Satan,* said he, *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* Until he had finished the work which was given him, he consulted his safety, often concealed himself, and avoided such an open display of his character and pretensions as might precipitate the designs of his enemies. But the moment the appointed time had arrived, we find him laying aside all reserve, courting the publicity which before he had shunned, and fearlessly, in the face of the sanhedrim, and even before the tribunal of Pilate, avowing himself *the Son of God,* though he well knew the effect would be to hasten his exit. While danger was at a distance, he was cautious and reserved; but the moment it arrived, he abandoned himself to it with a calm and fearless intrepidity.

Sixthly. In the case of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, it seems highly requisite that he who offers himself as the substitute, should

justify the law by which he suffers. To say the least, the decorum of the transaction will be much heightened on the supposition, that he who sustains vicarious punishment, not only yields his entire consent, but proclaims, at the same time, his conviction of the equity and goodness of the legal enactment to which he falls a sacrifice. It were to be desired, though it can scarcely be hoped, that penal laws were so constructed as to impress a persuasion of their justice universally on those who have incurred their penalties. But in the case we are now considering, which is, that of an innocent person substituting himself in the place of the guilty, there is a peculiar reason for demanding his express approval of the equity of the original sentence. The enthusiastic admiration which such conduct would naturally excite, the reverence which such a display of unparalleled magnanimity would necessarily attach to its possessor, could not fail to add dignity to his character, and weight to his sentiments; and if, while he submitted to the penalty, he reprobated the severity of the law, the feelings of the spectators might be divided between esteem for the illustrious sufferer, and an aversion to the supposed rigour of the law. Thus the character of the sufferer would operate in a contrary direction to the punishment, and tend to defeat its salutary effects.

In the substitution of the Redeemer of mankind were conjoined the most prompt and voluntary endurance of the penalty, with the most avowed

and cordial approbation of the justice of its sanctions. It was a great part of the business of his life, to assert and vindicate by his doctrine that law which he *magnified* and made illustrious by his passion.

Previous to his offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he was incessantly employed in rescuing the precepts of God from the false glosses by which they had been corrupted, in asserting their spirituality, exhibiting their extent, and sustaining their just authority, as the unalterable rule of action, and standard of duty.

Never had the law such an expounder as in the person of Him who came into the world to exhaust its penalties, and endure its curse. He condemned, with the greatest severity, every tenet or practice that went to weaken its obligations, or relax its strictness. To place it on the throne, to magnify and make it honourable, was not less the object of his ministry and of his life, than of his death. Thus, the sentiments of supreme devotion and attachment, to which he is entitled as the Saviour of the world, combine to strengthen our veneration for the law; nor can we pretend to any portion of the *mind of Christ*, but just in proportion to our practical regard to the law of God, as *holy, just, and good.* The more intimately our affections are united to Christ, the more, to speak in scripture language, *he dwells in our hearts by faith*, the more will the beauty of holiness attract the heart, and the deformity of sin be the object of our aversion.

As the love of Christ is the master-principle in the christian system, so its operation must invariably coincide with the claims of divine authority; because it is the love of a personage who was distinguished from all others by a constant compliance with its dictates, and a most ardent devotion to its honour. *Think not that I am come to subvert the law or the prophets: I am come not to subvert, but to ratify. For, verily I say unto you, heaven and earth shall sooner perish than one iota or one tittle of the law shall perish without attaining its end.** In such terms as these did our Saviour assert the intrinsic excellence and unalterable perpetuity of the law of God; by which he has instructed us in the true nature of his sacrifice, which was designed not merely to appease wrath, but to satisfy justice; not merely to relieve misery, but to expiate guilt. It is of the utmost importance that it should be indelibly engraved on our minds, that Christ died not merely to rescue us from the ruin which we had incurred, but from the punishment which we had merited; since our gratitude for the provisions of mercy will be exactly proportioned to the conviction we feel of the perfect equity of that sentence from which it exempts us. In this view we are unspeakably indebted to our great Deliverer for so zealously asserting the honours of that law which cost him so dear.

The penitent believer is now under no temptation to indulge depreciating thoughts of the

* Matt. v. 18. Dr. Campbell's version.

immutable excellence and obligation of that rule of duty which he has so frequently and awfully violated.

Seventhly. That the voluntary substitution of an innocent person, in the stead of the guilty, may be capable of answering the ends of justice, nothing seems more necessary than that the substitute should be of equal consideration, at least, to the party in whose behalf he interposes. The interests sacrificed by the suffering party, should not be of less cost and value than those which are secured by such a procedure.

But the aggregate value of those interests must be supposed to be in some proportion to the rank and dignity of the party to which they belong. As a sacrifice to justice, the life of a peasant must, on this principle, be deemed a most inadequate substitute for that of a personage of the highest order. We should consider the requisitions of justice eluded, rather than satisfied, by such a commutation. It is on this ground that St. Paul declares it to be *impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins;* the intrinsic meanness of the brute creation being such, that a victim taken from thence could be of no consideration in the eyes of offended justice. They were qualified to exhibit, as he reminds us, *a remembrance of sin every year,* but are utterly unequal to the expiation of its guilt.

In this view the redemption of the human race seemed to be hopeless; and their escape from

merited destruction, on any principles connected with law and justice, absolutely impossible. For where could an adequate substitute be found? Where, among the descendants of Adam, partakers of flesh and blood, could *one* be selected of such preeminent dignity and worth, that *his* oblation of himself should be deemed a fit and proper equivalent to the whole race of man? to say nothing of the impossibility of finding there a spotless victim (and no other could be accepted). Who is there that ever possessed that prodigious superiority in all the qualities which aggrandize their possessor to every other member of the human family, which shall entitle him to be the representative, either in action or in suffering, of the whole human race? In order to be capable of becoming a victim, he must be invested with a frail and mortal nature; but the possession of such a nature reduces him to that equality with his brethren, that joint participation of meanness and infirmity, which totally disqualifies him for becoming a substitute. Here a dilemma presents itself, from which there seems no possibility of escape. If man is left to encounter the judicial effects of his sentence, his ruin is sealed and certain. If he is to be redeemed by a substitute, that substitute must possess contradictory attributes, a combination of qualities not to be found within the compass of human nature. He must be frail and mortal, or he cannot die a sacrifice; he must possess ineffable dignity, or he cannot merit as a substitute.

Such were the apparently insurmountable difficulties which obstructed the salvation of man by any methods worthy of the divine character; such the darkness and perplexity which involved his prospects, that it is more than probable the highest created intelligence would not have been equal to the solution of the question, *How shall man be just with God?*

The *mystery hid from ages and generations,* the mystery of *Christ crucified,* dispels the obscurity, and presents, in the person of the Redeemer, all the qualifications which human conception can embody as contributing to the perfect character of a substitute. By his participation of flesh and blood, he becomes susceptible of suffering, and possesses within himself the materials of a sacrifice. By its personal union with the eternal Word, the sufferings sustained in a nature thus assumed, acquired an infinite value, so as to be justly deemed more than equivalent to the penalty originally denounced.

His assumption of the human nature made his oblation of himself *possible;* his possession of the divine rendered it efficient; and thus weakness and power, the imperfections incident to a frail and mortal creature, and the exemption from these, the attributes of time and those of eternity, the elements of being the most opposite, and deduced from opposite worlds, equally combined to give efficacy to his character as the Redeemer, and validity to his sacrifice. They constitute a person

who has no counterpart in heaven or on earth, who may be most justly denominated "*Wonderful;*" composed of parts and features of which, (however they may subsist elsewhere in a state of separation,) the combination and union, nothing short of infinite wisdom could have conceived, or infinite power effected. The mysterious constitution of the *person* of Christ, the stupendous link which unites God and man, and heaven and earth; that mystic ladder, on which *the angels of God ascended and descended,* whose foot is on a level with the dust, and whose summit penetrates the inmost recesses of an unapproachable splendour, will be, we have reason to believe, through eternity, the object of profound contemplation and adoring wonder.

In ascribing the sufficiency and efficacy of the atonement made by our Saviour to the preeminent dignity of his person as the Son of God, we are justified by the direct testimony of scripture, which is wont to unite these together in such juxta-position, as plainly implies their intimate and inseparable relation to each other.

We have already seen that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews founds the insufficiency of the victims under the law to take away sin, on their inherent meanness, with which he contrasts the validity of the atonement made by Christ: a mode of reasoning, the force of which entirely depends on his superior dignity and worth. After asserting that the blood of bulls and of goats could

not take away sin, he adds, *Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.* Adverting to the acknowledged fact that the blood of bulls and of goats availed to the purifying of the flesh, in other words, to the removal of ceremonial pollutions, he adds, *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living and true God.*

All must acknowledge that the purification of the conscience from dead works, that is, the pardon of sin and peace with God, is an infinitely greater benefit than the removal of legal disabilities under the ceremonial law; but the apostle teaches us to expect from the sacrifice of Christ this incomparably greater benefit, with a much firmer assurance than that with which the pious Jew anticipated the less. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son,* St. John assures us, *cleanseth us from all sin.* If St. Peter has occasion to enforce the obligation of shunning the pollutions of the world, the argument he makes use of for that purpose is derived from the value of that blood which was shed for their redemption, in comparison to which all the treasures of earth are consigned to contempt. *Forasmuch as ye know,* is his language, *ye were not redeemed with corruptible*

things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

As the whole provision of a Saviour originated in the gracious purpose of God, it is with the utmost propriety that he is denominated his *gift;* the transcendent greatness of which is frequently brought forward as a demonstration of the ineffable extent of his love. *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* But since he was given to be a propitiatory sacrifice, the same intrinsic dignity and excellence which heightened the value of the gift, must have contributed in an equal degree to ensure the validity and sufficiency of the sacrifice.

Though many have presumed to call in question, and even to deny the divinity of our Saviour, I am not aware that there are any who embrace that fundamental doctrine, who hesitate for a moment respecting the intrinsic validity of his sacrifice, or who entertain a doubt of the sufficiency of such a provision to satisfy the claims of justice and vindicate the honours of a broken law. There is something so stupendous in the voluntary humiliation

and death of him who claims to be *the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,* that to convince us of the fact, the most powerful and unequivocal testimony is indispensably necessary; but to be convinced of the validity and sufficiency of such a sin-offering for all the purposes for which an offering can be made, to perceive it to be the most ample vindication of the moral attributes of God, in consistence with the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners, no effort is necessary whatever: such a persuasion insinuates itself with the greatest ease, and takes the firmest possession of the mind. *He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

It is observable that the ineffable grace of God in the *communication* of spiritual blessings, is not more celebrated by the inspired penmen than the stupendous method in which they are imparted. That eternal life should be bestowed on sinful men, is the subject of their devout admiration; but that it should be bestowed at such a cost, is still more so. They appear to conceive it impossible for such an apparatus to terminate in a less glorious result.

A cold and sceptical philosophy may, I am aware, suggest specious cavils against the doctrines of revelation on this subject; cavils which derive all their force, not from the superior wisdom of their authors, but solely from the inadequacy of human

reason to the full comprehension of heavenly mysteries. But still there is a simple grandeur in the fact, that God has *set forth his Son to be a propitiation,* sufficient to silence the impotent clamours of sophistry, and to carry to all serious and humble men a firm conviction that the law is exalted, and the justice of God illustriously vindicated and asserted, by such an expedient. To minds of that description, the immaculate purity of the divine character, its abhorrence of sin, and its inflexible adherence to moral order, will present themselves in the cross in a more impressive light than in any other object.

Eighthly. However much we might be convinced of the competence of vicarious suffering to accomplish the ends of justice, and whatever the benefits we may derive from it, a benevolent mind could never be reconciled to the sight of virtue of the highest order finally oppressed and consumed by its own energies; and the more intense the admiration excited, the more eager would be the desire of some compensatory arrangement, some expedient by which an ample retribution might be assigned to such heroic sacrifices. If the suffering of the substitute involved his destruction, what satisfaction could a generous and feeling mind derive from impunity procured at such a cost? When David, in an agony of thirst, longed for the waters of Bethlehem, which some of his servants immediately procured for him with the extreme hazard of their lives, the monarch refused to taste

it, exclaiming, *It is the price of blood!* but *poured it out before the Lord.* The felicity which flows from the irreparable misery of another, and more especially of one whose disinterested benevolence alone exposed him to it, will be faintly relished by him who is not immersed in selfishness. If there be any portions of history, whose perusal affords more pure and exquisite delight than others, they are those which present the spectacle of a conflicting and self-devoted virtue, after innumerable toils and dangers undergone in the cause, enjoying a dignified repose in the bosom of the country which its example has ennobled, and its valour saved. Such a spectacle gratifies the best propensities, satisfies the highest demands of our moral and social nature. It affords a delightful glimpse of the future and perfect economy of retributive justice.

In the plan of human redemption, this requisition is fully satisfied. While we accompany the Saviour through the successive stages of his mortal sojourning, marked by a corresponding succession of trials, each of which was more severe than the former, till the scene darkened, and the clouds of wrath from heaven and from earth, pregnant with materials which nothing but a divine hand could have collected, discharged themselves on him in a deluge of agony and of blood, under which he expired,—we perceive at once the sufficiency, I had almost said, the redundancy, of his atonement.

But surely deliverance even *from the wrath to come* would afford an imperfect enjoyment, if it

were embittered with the recollection that we were indebted for it to the irreparable destruction of our compassionate Redeemer. The consolation arising from *reconciliation with God* is subject to no such deduction. While we rejoice in the cross of Christ as the source of pardon, our satisfaction is heightened by beholding it succeeded by the crown; by seeing him that was *for a little while made lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, seated at the right hand of God, thence expecting till his enemies are made his footstool.*

Thus, whether we contemplate the economy of redemption as a divine expedient for reconciling the moral attributes of Deity with man's salvation, or, in its final result, to the Saviour himself, it is replete with moral congruity, and satisfies every demand of the understanding and of the heart.

Ninthly. If the principle of substitution be at all admitted in the operations of criminal law, it is too obvious to require proof that it should be introduced very sparingly, only on very rare occasions, and never be allowed to subside into a settled course. So many circumstances, we have already seen, must concur to render it fit, that the attempt to make it a matter of frequent and ordinary occurrence, would be preposterous to the utmost degree. It requires some great crisis to justify its introduction, some extraordinary combination of difficulties, obstructing the natural course of justice; it requires, that while the letter

of the law is dispensed with, its spirit be fully adhered to; so that, instead of tending to weaken the motives to obedience, it shall present a salutary monition, a moral and edifying spectacle.

Considerations such as these are more than enough to show that such a method of procedure must be of rare occurrence; and that to this circumstance, whenever it does occur, its utility must in a great measure be ascribed.

The substitution of Christ in the room of a guilty race receives all the advantage as an impressive spectacle, which it is possible to derive from this circumstance. *He once suffered from the beginning of the world;* nor have we the least reason to suppose any similar transaction has occurred on the theatre of the universe, or will ever occur again in the annals of eternity. *It stands amidst the lapse of ages, and the waste of worlds, a single and solitary monument.*

From numerous intimations in Sacred Writ, we are compelled to believe that, in the comprehension of its design, and the extent of its consequences, affecting every order of being, it leaves no room for a counterpart or parallel; that it is, so to speak, the master-piece of infinite goodness and wisdom, intended to exhibit the riches of divine grace as an object for the eternal contemplation of the highest intelligences. *To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places,* is the language of Paul, *might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.*

Though the mystery of the cross may be considered as primarily terminating itself on the restoration of the human race to order and happiness, we cannot doubt for a moment of its extending its reflected lustre much farther, of its forming a new epoch in the moral administration of the Deity, and giving birth to a new order of things in the heavenly world.

Nothing is more certain than that christianity is a system which is at present but partially developed, in condescension probably to our very limited faculties, which are incapable of comprehending it in its full extent.

Be this as it may, the dignity of our Lord's person, the design of his sacrifice, together with the avowed purpose of the Father to *gather together in him all things that are in heaven or in earth,* conspire to place it beyond all doubt, that the *substitution* of Christ is an *unique* event. With the praises due to *Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,* none will have merit to share; nor will the emotions of gratitude, which his matchless achievements inspire, ever be dissipated and impaired by being distributed among many objects. The name of Jesus will remain eternally distinguished from every other, as the name to which *every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, or things on earth.*

Tenthly. Once more, whenever the expedient of vicarious suffering is adopted, a publication of the design of that transaction becomes as indis-

pensably necessary, as of the transaction itself; since none of the effects which it is intended to produce can be realised but in proportion as that is understood. Viewed in itself, and considered apart from this, it would seem the height of injustice, and, in the room of improving, would give a violent shock to our moral sentiments. Punishment inflicted on the offending party speaks for itself, and when ordained by law, impresses the spectator with an instantaneous conviction of its justice and propriety.

With vicarious punishment it is just the reverse. It is a spectacle so far removed from the usual course of events, that nothing can reconcile the mind to it but a clear exposure of its origin and design, and the peculiar circumstances of the crisis which determined its adoption.

Hence we see the infinite importance, in the doctrine of the cross, that not merely the fact of our Lord's death and sufferings should be announced, but that their object and purpose, as a great moral expedient, should be published to all nations. In vain would the apostles have proclaimed every where the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth, a person of spotless innocence, *was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day,* had they suppressed the mysterious design, the moral aspect of those stupendous transactions.

Apart from this, it would only have added one more to the humiliating examples of the purest

virtue oppressed with calumny, and doomed to a violent, painful, and ignominious death. It might have called forth the tears of sensibility, and there it would have ended, without exerting the slightest influence on the prospects, or changing the destiny of men. But the cross of Christ was not exhibited as a tragic spectacle, adapted to move the commiseration of mankind, and excite their horror at the perfidy, cruelty, and ingratitude, which were the human precursors of, the means of producing, that catastrophe: such emotion it has already occasioned, and will to the end of time; but all this in perfect subordination to a higher order of sentiments arising from the contemplation of his sufferings as the price of our redemption; the matchless expedient which the wisdom of God, prompted by infinite compassion, devised for *reconciling the world unto himself.* The facts which compose the records of the New Testament, the miracles which illustrated the life of our Saviour, and the prodigies which attended his death, important as they are, viewed as the seals attesting his mission, are only subsidiary: the whole of these, together with the mission itself, owe their importance chiefly to his sacrifice.

In the preceding ages, many intimations were afforded of this mystery. Sin had scarcely made its entrance into the world, before the guilty pair were comforted by the promise of *a seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head.* The institution of vicarious sacrifices immediately

succeeded, we have every reason to believe, by Divine appointment. The rejection of Cain's offering, and the acceptance of Abel's, demonstrated the necessity of the shedding of blood. A system of figurative rites and ceremonies, intended as silent predictions of the future, in which bloody sacrifices occupied the chief place, were ordained by Moses as *shadows of good things to come.* The succeeding prophets, in long succession, proclaimed the advent, and depicted the character and sufferings of *him that was to come;* some with more particularity and perspicuity than others, but each with some trait or colour peculiar to himself; till at length, *in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.*

The doctrine of remission of sins, through the blood of that victim which was once offered for the sins of the world, forms the grand peculiarity of the gospel, and was the principal theme of the apostolic ministry, and is still preeminently *the power of God to salvation.* It is inculcated throughout the New Testament in every possible form, it meets us at every turn, and is, in short, the sun and centre of the whole system.

Here, then, we are permitted to explore and contemplate that mysterious wisdom of God which was hidden in the secret of his counsels from preceding ages and generations, *but is now made manifest by the preaching of the holy prophets and*

apostles. Here we behold the Deity, in Christ Jesus, *reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses.* Here we discern the harmony of the divine attributes, as they are exerted and displayed in the astonishing work of man's salvation, the glory of God *shining in the face of Jesus Christ,* by which saints are changed into the *same image from glory to glory.* The cordial reception, the inwrought persuasion of this doctrine, cannot fail to purify the heart and renovate the character. The deepest conviction of the evil of sin, and the helplessness of the sinner, is necessarily involved in the belief of this all-comprehensive truth. For what estimate of the malignity and turpitude of sin must He have formed, who does nothing in vain, who saw that nothing would suffice for its expiation, short of the precious blood of his only-begotten Son? And how fatal the impotence which required to be extricated from its miseries, to be relieved from its burden, at such a cost? To create man, nothing was required but a word, *He spake, and it was done.* But to recover him from the ruin in which sin had involved him, it was necessary for the Eternal Son to become incarnate, and *the Lord of life* to expire upon a cross. This is the mirror which reflects the true features and lineaments of moral evil, and displays more of its demerit than the most profound contemplation of the law, of the purity of its precepts, or the terror of its sanctions, could have conveyed to any finite mind. In pouring its vials on the

head of that innocent and adorable victim, it evinced its inflexible severity, its awful majesty, to an extent, and in a form never conceived before; and we may well suppose that superior intelligences turn from the contemplation of such a spectacle with a new impression of the Great Supreme, as *a just God, and yet a Saviour.*

He who derives from this doctrine the smallest encouragement to sin, has never either felt or understood it as he ought. He has never surveyed it in its most interesting aspect, in its relation to the character of God, the demands of his law, and the immutable rights of his moral administration. He has never, to speak in the language of scripture, *seen the Son* in such a manner as to *believe on him;* and, however he may be persuaded of the death of Christ as *a fact,* he is a total stranger to the doctrine of *Christ crucified.*

If the substitution of the Redeemer in the stead of a guilty race is admitted, it is easy to perceive that it is the only foundation of human hope; and that the attempt to combine it with any thing else as the material of justification, must necessarily be abortive. Nothing else can possibly stand in the same order. The merit of the Saviour, arising from his matchless condescension and love, in being *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* is of so elevated and transcendent a kind, as to disclaim all association with the imperfect of human virtue as the basis of justification. The price of redemption (to use a scriptural

metaphor) has been paid; the justice of God is satisfied; a full and complete atonement has been made. Nothing remains on the part of the penitent sinner, but to receive the reconciliation, and, with the emotions of humble gratitude, to open his heart to that inspiration of love, which naturally results from the reception of so great a benefit.

The habitual contemplation of the cross of Christ, will be found the most effectual expedient for weakening the power of corruption, resisting the seductions of the world, and rising progressively into the image of God and the Redeemer.

It will, at the same time, lay the deepest foundation for humility. He who ascribes his salvation to this source, will be exempted from every temptation to exalt himself; and while he rejoices in the ample provision made for the pardon of his sins, and the relief of his miseries, he will join with the utmost ardour in the song of the redeemed: *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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